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PHILOSOPHY FOR CHILDREN: THE QUEST FOR AN AFRICAN
PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

An education that does not recognise schools as places for the mere transmission and assimilation of knowledge, but as places for critical and creative inquiry, is quality education. Philosophising with children in schools assumes that children are actively and deliberately encouraged in seeking responses to the questions about reality they raise at a very early age. The practice of philosophy is undoubtedly one of the underpinnings of a quality education for all. By contributing to opening children's minds, building their critical reflection and autonomous thinking, philosophy contributes to the protection against manipulation and exclusion at the hands of adults. If education in general must open up to children the maps of an intricate world in a continuous state of tension, then philosophy is a compass for navigating that world. Hence children, irrespective of their geographical location and regardless of their social milieu or state of development of their country, deserve to be equipped with the tools so motivated for.

Using conceptual analysis as a tool, I explore the Lipman method of Philosophy for Children by presenting a case for an African perspective of the same. I situate doing philosophy with children in the context of the African philosophy debate. While Lipman's model provides the case for the role of rational, logical and systematic thinking in children, the African background promises the raw materials on which the said instruments work. I therefore settle for a hybridised Philosophy for Children programme that marries the universalist and the particularist views of doing philosophy. I argue that the traditional African notion of *community* plays a significant role in our understanding of the community of inquiry as pedagogy of doing philosophy with children. Embedded in African "*community*" is the concept of *ukama* qua relationality, which constitutes a keystone in the envisaged African perspective of Philosophy for Children. I conclude that doing philosophy with children in schools in Africa contributes to the interpretation of the cultural, economic and circumstances of the African situation.

Keywords

African Philosophy

Child

Community of Inquiry

Critical Thinking

Hybridisation

Hermeneutics

Philosophy

Ukama

DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my own unaided work. It is being submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before any degree or examination at any other University.

Amasa Philip Ndofirepi

To my late mother, Estina Sharai, with love.

PUBLICATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS EMANATING FROM THIS RESEARCH

1. Ndofirepi, A.P., & Shumba, A. (2012). Reasonable children, reasonable citizens: The contributions of philosophy for children to post-apartheid South Africa. *Journal of Social Sciences*, 30, 251-261.
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Introduction

The Research Question

Philosophy is particularly pertinent in contemporary Africa, since it develops the required skills that undergird positive democratic decision-making. These may be in the form of the deep understanding of the central concepts upon which democracy leans and the social dispositions that are necessary for democratic citizenship. Given that philosophy is involved in the exploration of different possibilities and dissimilar points of view through dialogical and discursive deliberation, it has the promise of engaging participants, including children, in kinds of deliberative encounters with each other that will help enhance a more tolerant and reasonable citizenry. But according to the UNESCO (2007) questionnaire, "...virtually no Philosophy for Children initiatives appears to have been instigated in schools in the region of Africa or if they have, they have yet to be publicized via the Internet or in journal articles. In Africa, there is very little activity in the area of Philosophy for Children, apart from the work of a handful of academics..." UNESCO (2007, p. 42) UNESCO (2007, p. 42) (p. 42).

For many years, Philosophy for Children or, more specifically, the thought of introducing philosophy in schools and hence developing philosophical inquiry, has enthused growing attention and eagerness around the globe coupled with progressively more acknowledgement of the value of motivating reflection and questioning a young age. UNESCO (2009) also recognises that learning to philosophise at pre-school and primary levels has not yet been advanced in Africa, though the region can make an immense contribution to this innovative approach, which is undergoing constant experimentation elsewhere. To this end, the High-Level Regional Meeting on the Teaching of Philosophy in Africa held in Mauritius in September 2009 has challenged philosophy in Africa:

“...to help us reconcile apparently mutually exclusive goals: thinking together and thinking differently... teaching philosophy and generating free philosophical discourse at all levels that we will develop minds empowered to resist the pernicious manifestations of intolerance and extremism, irrationality and fanaticism... (*and*) instilling in our children the drive to study philosophy and putting it to practical use is insurance for the continuation of democracy and pro-development growth in our continent” (Bunwaree, 2009, p. 7).

In a related comment on the notion of an African Philosophy of Education and with reference to South Africa, Kai Horsthemke and Penny Enslin observe that the advent of post-apartheid education ushered the call for an educational philosophy with “... a focus on Africa and its cultures, identities and values, and the new imperatives for education in a postcolonial and post-apartheid era...” with debates focusing on “...a revisioned, ‘typically African’ philosophy of education” (Horsthemke & Enslin, 2009a, p. 209). The comments above offer some challenges as well as claims. If Aristotle (1964) was right in his assertion that “...we ought either to pursue philosophy or bid farewell to life and depart from this world, because all other things seem to be utter nonsense and folly” (p. 44), then given the UNESCO (2009) report one would be curious why African schoolchildren have been thwarted from accessing philosophy from an early age. However, the observations above implicitly acknowledge that there exists in Africa the potential of doing philosophy with children (as has been initiated elsewhere) and of initiating a philosophy of education that it calls its own. At the heart of my research, I attend to the challenge: What contributions, if any, can the thoughts and practices in Africa make to the field of Philosophy for Children, and what possibilities are on offer?

Scope of the Study

The research question above suggests that I will focus this study on traditional African thoughts and practices and hence attend primarily to the African Philosophy debate. Admittedly, this is one of the ways of analysing a concept which bears the name “African”. I explore the concept of Philosophy for Children in the context of African

thoughts and practices. To do this, however, one needs to start by looking at the meaning of “Philosophy”. Hence, I begin by attempting the question: What is Philosophy? I would not make my thesis explicit without exposing the concept of “child” and childhood in the practices and thoughts of the Africans. The concept of doing philosophy with *children* in schools, had its origins in the West, having been initiated by Matthew Lipman, and is new in the history of educational ideas. Hence, the need to briefly examine the conceptions of childhood and child development from the the western perspective. One will not do justice in a study such as this one without elaborating on the notion of Philosophy for Children. To this end, I provide the historical antecedents of the initiation of the programme and reveal its philosophical nature as suggested by its proponent(s). The question then is, how does one do philosophy with children? This leads me to examine the concept of ‘community of inquiry’ as a pivotal pedagogy in doing philosophy with children. However, central to this study is the African perspective of doing philosophy. Faced with the challenge of the tradition /modernity debate in this era of globalism, is it still justifiable to defend something as “African”? Is one not falling into the trap of essentialising and overglorifying a traditional Africa that is no longer there? I will argue in defence of the African perspective of a Philosophy for Children in Africa that hybridises traditional African ways of doing Philosophy with Children and the Lipmanian proposal. I will make a case for the significance of the *Ukama* ethic (as relationality or relatedness) as one of the most noteworthy contributions that African thoughts and practices bring to the understanding of not only the African perspective of Philosophy for Children, but also the global view of it. In the final analysis, I argue that if our quest for an African perspective of doing philosophy is to bear the authentic name “African”, then such an African philosophy of education should start from a “hermeneutics of African culture” (Okere, 1983). However, given this mammoth task I have set for myself, one would ask for the method(s) I would employ to fulfil this.

Methodology

I will deconstruct and reconstruct traditional African thoughts and practices by engaging a variety of sources with the hope to interrogate what the literature has in store. My

study will be deconstructive in the sense I repudiate and decentre the Eurocentric paradigmatic forms on Africa. I argue against those models of thought that emphasise the West's educational and philosophical supremacy over other people and the associated denial of any other competing group as portrayed in their own historical constructions. The reclamation of historicity of the African thoughts and practices provides the reconstructive aspect of this research. I will use conceptual analysis to conduct this theoretical research and apply logical tests. My method is informed by Petocz & Newgberry (2010)'s proposition that conceptual analysis in research is used to

...examine logical structures, including assumptions and implications, and apply tests of clarity, intelligibility, coherence, and so on to our concepts, questions, hypotheses, and theories ... (It is the *first* sense in which conceptual analysis is *primary*... it is the first step in scientific inquiry ... it is that part of scientific research that must be applied *prior* to the choice of any specific observational method (p.130).

In the context of this thesis, the conceptual analysis becomes the explication and unravelling of the views held by many about the African potential to do philosophy with children. Furthermore, the method is justified by the understanding that concept analysis is an authentic and accepted method for opening an area of inquiry in the field of education and in the context of philosophy of education. It produces an integrated perspective of the state of education as a social science that serves as a background for further inquiry to deliberately produce new knowledge (Penrod & Hupcey, 2005, p. 407).

While I will draw from a range of positions, I do not deny that an element of description may not be avoided though the intention is to adopt a more conceptual and analytic approach. From the beginning, it must be spelt out clearly that the aim is not to produce an *entirely* novel African perspective of Philosophy for Children. Rather, what I present is an argument of the systematic development an Afro-centred Philosophy for Children programme that carries the authentic name "African". Philosophical reflection and argumentation, including the philosophical ideas that their inquiries incorporate are central features of the methods and procedures of the conceptual analysis as a method of

educational research. I will leave it to my colleagues in the empirical field of research to test the validity and reliability of my assertions and claims. Given this justification, practitioners and policymakers may be interested in asking the question: What is the educational significance of the findings of such a research? Expressed differently: What difference will it make if the educational policies or practices are transformed, based on findings and recommendations of an analytical research such as this one?

Significance of the Study and Contributions to Education

I carry out this study with a view that all educational research should be educative; that it is one of the pivotal devices for directly improving educational practice. Elliott has proposed that “...the overriding purpose of educational research is to bring about worthwhile educational change”; *(and)that* “...research is only educational when it is directed towards realising educational values in practice” (Elliott, 1990, p. 4) . An analytic piece of research such as this one will provide theory as opposed to practice and a fund of knowledge to policymakers, educational practitioners, as well as other stakeholders. Given that analysis serves to extricate the different contexts in which education is discussed by considering the central ideas and suitable, sufficient conditions relevant to each, the concept analysis model promises enormous influence on educational theorising. The analytical function embraces almost all the aspects of the language of education, among them its concepts, beliefs, presumptions and theories. Hence, it has the “...capacity to resolve educational problems and improve educational practice” (Carr & Kemmis, 1986, p. 109) by clearing the thickets of conceptual confusion and murkiness from any of its possible pathways. The question then is: To whom is the research worthwhile and how plausible are its possibilities and promises?

The first group of stakeholders is the policymakers and curriculum planners. My findings draw the attention of these players to reconsider the innovation and experimentation of Philosophy for Children in schools in Africa given the justification for it that I will provide. If compelling, this should provide the impetus for them to convince their respective governments and other interested parties to experiment with

and possibly implement such a programme in Africa. On interacting with this research study, I hope authors and publishers of textbooks and other related materials will find new insights with which to initiate resources for doing critical thinking with children in the 21st-century Africa. Teachers, especially in schools in Africa, will hopefully find it beneficial to share with me the value of such an innovation for children. In addition, Philosophy for Children practitioners elsewhere around the globe might be persuaded to see the possibilities that are open to testing from a different perspective altogether, especially from the so-called developing world with strong ties to tradition. For many parents and guardians of children, this thesis may be an eye-opener for an alternative pedagogy available to their children in schools and at home by exposing them to the capabilities that children in Africa have for thinking critically, creatively and caringly with others. Colleagues in the field of educational research are at the heart of my aims. My research will leave an open space for other researchers, especially those in the empirical domain to put the theory I offer into practice in their schools. What I will provide is the theoretical groundwork that will hopefully provoke and incite further research.

Chapter Outline

This study is broken down into three parts as shown below.

Part 1: Philosophy, ‘Child’ and Philosophy of Education in Traditional Africa

This section of my thesis informs, and is the foundation of, the arguments that I make in this study. Chapter 1, *What is Philosophy*, focuses on the question of definition. To this question some well-worn philosophical and meta-philosophical questions can be added: What is philosophical? In what ways are philosophical concepts generated? Must philosophy be a professional discipline and must philosophers, in the narrow sense of the word, become professional? Should all humans engage philosophy in the same way? A preliminary definition describes philosophy as an inquiry into the basic assumptions of any field of interest. In this chapter philosophy as a discipline is characterised. The chapter reveals that despite philosophy being an ancient activity, it has not been settled by public consensus.

In Chapter 2, *The African Philosophy Debate*, I examine the notion of philosophy in the context of Africa by engaging in the long-standing debate of the African philosophy question. I do not wish to justify in detail, or provide a defence of, the existence of a philosophy that can be said to be “African”. If such a philosophy exists, what is “African”? I make attempts to define the concept using the geographical criterion. Although I deliberately avoid the race criterion, implicitly I am driven to employ it. To better understand the concept of African philosophy, I examine Odera Oruka’s (1990c) different trends or perspectives of philosophy in Africa.

The increasing rate of globalisation has brought with it changing roles of children. Hence the concepts ‘*child*’ and ‘*childhood*’ have undergone some tremendous evolution. Chapter 3, *Conceptions of Childhood and Child Development* attempts to explore the notion ‘child’ in traditional African societies by comparing and contrasting with western perspectives of the same. It is hoped that arguments from this chapter will form the bedrock for the discussions in Part 3. An understanding of the concept of child will inform the education a society provides. To this end, I wind up Part 1 with an exposé of traditional African educational practices in Chapter 4 titled: *Education in Traditional African Societies*.

Part 2: Philosophy for Children through the Community of Inquiry

Philosophy has much to offer, in as far as it is essential to the cultivation of thoughtful people. The teaching of philosophy is unquestionably one of the keystones of quality education, since it contributes to opening the mind, fostering critical reflection and independent thinking. In this part of the study, I examine the concept of Philosophy for Children more broadly as the introduction of philosophising with children in schools. But the questions that quickly come to mind are: What does it mean to treat a child as a philosopher? Does philosophy have a place in the education of the child? These are intricate questions and the concepts therein are ambivalent, and intertwined with each

other. Part 2 attempts to expose some of the misconceptions of the notion of Philosophy for Children. Chapter 5, *Milestones of Philosophy for Children*, presents some of the philosophical thoughts of people who lived in different epochs, especially about children's ability to think philosophically. It serves as an introductory review of the significant hallmarks in the history of ideas prior to the conception of Matthew Lipman-initiated Philosophy for Children.

In Chapter 6, titled: *What is Philosophy for Children?*, I examine the theoretico-philosophical underpinnings of Philosophy for Children by attempting to answer the question: What is at stake with children learning to philosophise in schools? Central to this initiative, I look at Philosophy for Children as a proposal for education to improve learners' thinking skills coupled with critical, creative, caring and collaborative thinking. I acknowledge that globally there are different alternative ways of doing philosophy with children. For this study, however, I confine the discourse to the Lipmanian method since Lipman is arguably the leading proponent of the initiative, especially in the West.

Chapter 7, *The Community of Inquiry*, addresses the method question. Lipman's distinguished insight was to marry community of inquiry as pedagogy with philosophy as doing within a curriculum for elementary and secondary learners. This marriage is the essence of the Philosophy for Children programme. The community of philosophical inquiry is an approach of practising philosophy in a group (of children, in this case), which is characterised by dialogue; and creates its discussion agenda from questions which are posed by the conversants in response to some stimulus. The epistemological principle of community of inquiry is that communal dialogue, facilitated by a philosophically educated person, reviews and reconstructs the major elements of the philosophic tradition through the dispersed thinking, which is characteristic of dialogical discourse.

Part 3 Philosophy for Children: The African Perspective

The present postcolonial African situation can best be explained in the context of crises. Lagging behind, as it were, on all developmental fronts, Africa is regarded by many as the world's tragedy. The superimposition of alien colonialist cultures on the indigenous is often used to explain the mixed-up cultural amalgam that characterises the present Africa. But is there no African perspective of development, of education and of governance, to mention only a few? In this part, I am primarily concerned with the debate of an African perspective of Philosophy for Children. Chapter 8 looks at the concept of "the African perspective" in light of the tradition/ modernity debate; hence the heading *Tradition and Modernity: Positioning the African Perspective*. By providing a clarified view of the notion, it will become much easier to situate Philosophy for Children within this context. I consider a critical exposé of the Ukama ethic qua relationality as offering a promise for an understanding of doing philosophy for children in Africa. Hence, I titled my Chapter 9 *Ukama — a Contribution to Philosophy for Children*. Chapter 10 provides a summary of the whole thesis and ends with making *Some Concluding Remarks and Recommendations*.

Chapter 1: What is Philosophy?

“Not asking certain questions is pregnant with more dangers than failing to answer the questions already on the official agenda; while asking the wrong kind of questions all too often helps avert eyes from the truly important issues. The price of silence is paid in the hard currency of human suffering.” (Bauman, 1998, p. ix)

1.1 Introduction

The question, what is philosophy, is a reflexive one. It is *about* philosophy, provoked by *philosophers* themselves and represents an old and complex *philosophical* problem. Due to the complexity, each time philosophers attempt to discover what it is, they inevitably emerge with a new way of dealing with it, which is actually one way of doing philosophy. As a result, philosophy itself has traditionally been a considerable controversy. In effect, philosophy “is its own first problem” (Lucas, 1969, p. 1) and there is no other discipline that continues to question itself the way philosophy does. One of the central questions is: Is philosophy a body of knowledge? Whatever it is there are several questions that emanate from this. Divergent views as to what philosophy is, what it offers man and what it aspires to do dominate all debates that are said to be philosophical. The philosophy question is therefore a vexing philosophical issue that resists every attempt to answer it in a definitive manner. Philosophical reflections are notorious for their inconclusiveness. However, philosophy can also be approached from different viewpoints. In the context of this study, each approach will be considered as a supplement of the other and not as its contradiction and, as such, each will assist in making clear the diversity in meaning of philosophy and what different philosophers may say about the nature and functions of philosophy. As I focus on the question: Is it possible to talk of an African perspective of Philosophy for Children, there is a need to

foreground this debate with the issues of the philosophical question: what is philosophy?

An attempt will be made to explore the meaning of philosophy. In order to do this, the three functions of philosophy, that is, the normative, the descriptive and the analytic will be explored. Also to be examined is the controversy surrounding philosophy as universal or cultural/particular practice. It is hoped that by examining the notion of philosophy, it will help define and qualify African Philosophy, an African Philosophy of education and consequently an African perspective of Philosophy for Children. The question of whether children in Africa can do philosophy or not and the functions and value of philosophy to children in Africa in the 21st century can best be understood if we have ascertained what philosophy is. My attention to the meaning of philosophy in this chapter will help me focus on the subsequent questions in later parts of the study. These will include: 1) Is philosophy with children possible? 2) Can the Lipmanian model of Philosophy for Children be introduced in Africa? 3) Is there a philosophy situated in Africa? In all these philosophical questions, the notion of *philosophy* is a common denominator and therefore one cannot do away with an attempt at a comprehensive definition of it so that readers will come to terms with the central theses in the study.

Given the brief characterisation of the concept of philosophy, I hope to explore in this chapter the nature and aim of philosophy before considering the two main conceptions of philosophy, that is, 1) philosophy as a worldview or personal attitude 2) philosophy as an activity and philosophy as an academic discipline of study. This categorisation is relevant to the central issues that my thesis seeks to examine, that is: Is there a possibility of an African perspective of Philosophy for Children? Without an elucidation of the three conceptions of philosophy mentioned, my argument will lack a lot of its intended strength.

1.2 The Nature and Character of Philosophy

Philosophy itself suggests an array of theoretical approaches (Blackburn, 2004). Some essentialist thinkers acknowledge that great scholarly works such as Plato's *Republic* or

Descartes's *Meditations* count as philosophy, who by laying down a definition, create a permanent and universal conception so that whatever lies within is philosophy and what is without is not. Others who hold on to the academic definition believe that philosophy is whatever is produced by people paid as philosophers in university faculties. The extreme approach is one that proposes that any text that gets read as philosophy counts as philosophy. In a way, the latter approach submits to the conviction that philosophy lies in the eye of the beholder. I find the latter problematic in that no two philosophers will agree on either the nature or status of philosophy that borders the definition. In support of the above, Anyanwu has put forward the position that those who seek to determine what philosophy is with one and only definition, are misguided. Thus he writes:

Most people who ask about the definition of philosophy find out that different philosophers give different definitions of it, and that such definitions are conflicting and contradictory. The innumerable definitions...seem to betray the preferences of each philosopher and to show the impossibility of offering a simple definition...or having one philosophy acceptable to all men, in all cultures and at all times... (Anyanwu, 2000, p. 126).

The significant character that is explicit in the above quotation is the elusiveness of the definition. Besides, Anyanwu observes that the enterprise of philosophy is characterised by the inconclusiveness of philosophical issues and reflections. Without a specific subject matter and therefore lacking a particular area of investigation, philosophy makes it difficult to tie itself to any exclusive and specific sphere. Hence, it is a philosophical problem to show outright distinctions between philosophical and non-philosophical discourses. An attempt at these will be made in Chapter 2. Due to the numerous complexities of the notion, philosophy has come to be misunderstood by many. This could be attributed to wide misconception about its nature, purpose, methods, and relevance to public affairs in particular and human purposes in general. Hence critics of this study might question: What is philosophically significant and what counts as Philosophy for Children? Given the complexity of the definition what then, in effect, is

an African perspective of Philosophy for Children? This will be examined later in this study.

Philosophy is not a fixed body of knowledge but is rather a continuous, ongoing reflective process as will be defended in the later parts of this chapter. In addition, philosophy is dynamic and not static and changes with time in terms of its content and character. While the past has often defined philosophy in terms of wisdom, science, analysis, critique etc, and has been practised in different locales, for example the market place, churches and universities, this historical dimension is overtaken by the definition of philosophy as a mental activity. Yes, we might find it difficult to define philosophy by referring to its nature but we can understand the nature of philosophy by referring to it as an attitude of the mind, its source and its aim.

The etymological meaning of philosophy, derived from the Greek composite *philosophia* is the '*love of wisdom*'. Love is named initially to underscore a craving and striving to accomplish wisdom. This involves the passion to begin and sustain questioning things that are taken for granted. Thus, the continued quest for knowledge; its passionate search, and not its possession, is the essence of wisdom. As a result, philosophy becomes an inquisitive *attitude* of the mind. Philosophy thus is cognitive and conceptual since its content involves "...the exploration of the most basic ideas and problems of everyday life..." and is also metacognitive in content since the process is about "improving one's own thinking and reasoning..." (Fisher, 1996, p. 1). But the question is: What is the source of philosophy? Do all people, of different races and ages, develop an inquisitive attitude? An attempt will be made in this study to reflect on this as I situate an African perspective of Philosophy for Children.

The initial source of philosophical questioning is the sense of wonder — a sort of childlike wonder about just about everything. Even among the ancient philosophers

from Socrates, Plato to Aristotle there is consensus that wonder, puzzlement, astonishment and amazement mark the starting point of philosophy. Plato puts the following words in Socrates as he writes, “I see, my dear Theaetetus, that Theodorus had a true insight into your nature when he said that you were a philosopher, for wonder is the feeling of a philosopher, and philosophy begins in wonder.” (Plato, 155d, p. 37) Aristotle echoes Theaetetus in *Metaphysics*: “It was their wonder, astonishment, that first led men to philosophise and still leads them” (Aristotle, 982b). For Plato, wonder refers to curiosity, to questioning and to seeking an answer to the questions raised by life. Doubt as a condition between belief and disbelief, involves indecision or mistrust of a supposed truth, an action, a motive, or a decision. Wonder involves the state of being curious and being in doubt. When we start to doubt that we do not fully understand and have not fully justified our basic beliefs about the world, we begin to philosophise. In this sense wonder, doubt and philosophy are connected, with wonder being a necessary condition for philosophy. In reiterating the role of “wonder” in the activity of philosophy, Omoregbe (1998) observes the following:

...the first step in the philosophical activity is this “wonder” that accompanies man’s contact with himself or the world around him. This wonder gives rise to some fundamental questions and this is the second step. The third step is taken when man begins to reflect on these fundamental questions in search of answers. At this stage, the man in question is philosophising... (p. 3).

Amazement and bewilderment form the basis on which philosophers devise and formulate the *what* and *why* questions in a bid to have comprehension of the problem at hand. Questions are the first instrument in the philosopher’s arsenal with which he or she works. It is out of the workings of an inquiring mind that philosophy emerges. It also comes to light out of human intellectual curiosity to transcend common sense. Philosophy, as Russell (2005) puts it “...keeps alive our sense of wonder by showing familiar things in an unfamiliar aspect” (p.37). But, if everything on which philosophy lays a hand changes its nature from known to unknown, then what does philosophy aim for?

Philosophy aims at understanding and enlightenment rather than providing short conclusive answers. While searching for truth, philosophy does not close out new evidence but rather the search is perpetual striving for new insights. When comparing philosophical inquiry and scientific inquiry, one observes that the latter seeks knowledge that provides specific answers while the former enters by searching for answers on the residual questions that the former has failed to address. However, both attempt to provide answers, though science will end at a point where empirical evidence provides the answers while philosophy will theorise about the general implications of the evidence. The central concern of philosophy is to attend to insoluble questions for example, “what is life?” “Does reality exist?” “What is to know?” If philosophy’s central concern is the pursuit of questions that scientific inquiry has to answer then the empirical world would query the excitement of the enterprise of philosophy? If it is so complex, abstract and mentally unsettling, is it suitable for everyone, including children? I argue that philosophy increases our understanding of the problem at hand. It is by remaining curious and asking questions about the commonplace and the assumed knowledge that we keep theoretical knowledge alive. Philosophy as a critical activity of the mind comes alive regardless of its non-committal to provide definitive answers. The above characterisation provides the goal of philosophy as the enlargement of self-contemplation of the infinity of the universe – what Russell (2005) calls “contemplative vision or speculation”. But, if this is what a philosophical activity involves, then do all people philosophise, including children? If children are included, who between adults and children does more philosophising than the other? Later in this study, I shall attempt addressing these questions. In the next section, I discuss the two conceptions of the notion of philosophy, namely the worldview conception and the process view of it.

1.3 Conceptions of Philosophy

As discussed in the section above, to do philosophy is to ask questions of a special kind about central human problems and then to grapple with them in a rigorous and meticulous way. Some conceive philosophy as a worldview; “...an accumulation of contents or products” (Estarellas, 2007 n.p.), and others an activity or a process — what

Pecorino (1985) refers to as the “process view” (p .80). The nature and character of each will be explored in the sections below coupled with their critique.

1.3.1 The worldview conception of philosophy

The popular saying that “each of us has a philosophy” and “my philosophy is...” reflects the conception of philosophy as a worldview. Such a definition suggests “worldview” as a general view of the world. But the appearance of the word does not disclose the full meaning of this intricate intellectual phenomenon (Spirkin, 1983). Generally, we can say all people think and thinking is the passageway that leads to philosophy. This argument has led people to reasonably conclude that everyone has the potential of becoming a philosopher. Besides, proponents of this view hold that since we all experience life, we think and reflect on the challenges of life and therefore we develop our individual philosophies of life. Frost (1962) explains the above perspective as he writes:

Your philosophy, then, is the meaning which the world has for you. It is your answer to the question, “why?” having fitted your experiences into the whole, having related them to each other, you say of the world, this is the way things fit together. This is the world as I understand it. This is my philosophy (p.1).

The above is often referred to as the common-sense view of philosophy. It is an attempt to define philosophy as a collection of views or beliefs one or a group of people have about the world and though often held uncritically. In this sense, philosophy is an attitude, a belief or a wish and therefore a product. Based on personal preferences, the worldview conception holds that individuals or a group of people can select a body of thought that they can call theirs. Thus worldview is a system of generalised views of the world, including man’s place in it; a view of man’s relationship to the world and himself/herself (Spirkin, 1983). Besides posing as an independent existence in the sphere of social consciousness, worldview is individual; with individuals forming their identity by defining their views of the world. However, noteworthy is the understanding

that despite the diversity of worldviews there are, in each worldview, some common questions that transcend the particular and therefore are universal in their revelation of a certain unity. For instance, what is reality? How do we come to know reality? What is right or wrong?

To grasp further the understanding of philosophy as worldview, Wolters (1983) explores more the different conceptions of the connection between worldview and philosophy. According to the first conception, worldview “repels” philosophy in that there is an unavoidable tension that exists between “...theoretical philosophy and existential worldview” (p.15). In other words, the worldview conception does not accommodate philosophy as an activity that challenges and resists the existing views and beliefs man hold about their life-world. In the second conception, worldview “crowns” philosophy in that “worldview is not alien to philosophy but is instead its highest manifestation” (p. 16). To acknowledge this, proponents of this model look at worldviews that an individual has or a people have. Expressed differently, this model speaks of worldview as the pinnacle and product of the activity of philosophising; that is, to demonstrate that the process of doing philosophy is only evidenced by the end product — the worldview. In this sense, philosophy has a task of combining the conclusions of the different sciences with the human experiences to produce some kind of consistent worldview.

According to the third conception, for Wolters (1983), worldview “flanks” philosophy. In other words, this model views the two as running side by side and therefore should be kept separate. Thus, it is mandatory not to confuse worldview with philosophy and neither should we allow for compromise. To that end, the model holds that we should understand worldview and philosophy as separate entities. The opposite view of the second model is the fourth – that worldview “yields” philosophy. Put differently, the model looks at philosophy as a product of a worldview and not the opposite. Worldview in this sense leads to philosophy; that is, philosophy is an expression of the worldview.

Philosophy can only take place in the context of worldview(s). In this context, worldview is a group of perennial problems in which people develop interest and for which philosophers have always sought answers. This leads to an understanding of the duality between philosophy and worldview with the former as the process that not only works on the latter but with the latter being a product of the former. In Chapter 9, I shall demonstrate the relationship between philosophy and worldview by showing the connections between African cultural products such as folklore, proverbs and others as raw materials for philosophising with children and the critical, rational and systematic tools the process of philosophy offers.

What then are the implications of this relationship? Is philosophy necessarily a worldview or a worldview necessarily philosophy? Or, should the two never be conflated? What I find interesting is the basic idea that both philosophy and worldview share a cognitive orientation of *viewing the world*, although they differ in terms of emphasis. While philosophy stresses the universal, abstract and individual nature of viewing, worldview emphasises the specific, concrete and unique character of viewing. In this sense, for Wolters (1983), worldview "... represents a point of view from a particular vantage point, a perspective on things which cannot transcend its own historicity" (p. 18). Thus, a worldview is characterised by being individual, dated and private. However, as indicated earlier on, a worldview may be more than personal. If held by everyone belonging to a nation or a people, it is collective. This does not dissolve its particularity, since its existence does not go beyond the people or culture from which it originates. Thus, we can talk of the Shona worldview, Akan worldview or Sotho worldview, and none of these worldviews can claim their existence in others. In addition, the worldview is more related to the practices specific to a people and its functions within it. In the process, it misses the theoretical component. Thus, it is often considered unscientific unlike philosophy, which, by its theoretical nature, is not particular to culture alone but rather transcends cultures and individuals, thereby giving it a universal character. The question then is: Is it plausible to talk of A's philosophy as A's worldview? I argue that when referring to A's individual thoughts about the

individual's unique, permanent and particular world, we are referring to the individual's worldview. In this sense, worldview is equated to philosophy since it is a way of viewing man and the world that results in a world outlook in the first place. Making much the same point, Wiredu (1992) writes that, "Any group of human beings will have to have some world outlook, that is, some general conceptions about the world in which they live and about themselves both as individuals and members of society" (p.40).

But, unless these views are subjected to the process of rigorous, systematic analysis for them to adopt a more theoretical and universal understanding of the world they remain worldview apart from philosophy. They remain a body of ideas, doctrines and beliefs held by an individual and a people and fixed in the context in which they originated. Conversely, can we rightly speak of African philosophy, British philosophy, or Asian when referring to the customs, traditions, ideas and beliefs held by the Africans, British, and Asians, respectively, in their own geographical backgrounds? Are a people's egocentric and unexamined habits of mind classified as "philosophy" or are they simply unarticulated and unsynthesised beliefs disposed to vagueness and contradiction? In the context of this study, one can further ask: Is an African perspective of Philosophy for Children defined in the context of doctrines and traditional African belief systems? Discussions that follow in Part 2 of this thesis will attempt to establish the contrary. From the arguments raised in this section, I would argue that it is a misconception to refer to them as philosophy; they are, rather, worldviews. Misconceptions about the nature and character of philosophy may be attributed to widespread ignorance of what philosophy has achieved through works of great philosophers. Those who are skeptical about the value of philosophy have not bothered to know its subject matter, how it is pursued and what its capabilities are. I now turn to the other conception of philosophy — philosophy as a process.

1.3.2 The process conception of philosophy

The discussion above has mentioned the complexity of defining the nature of philosophy. The process view which I will explore in this section looks at philosophy as

an activity, "...an activity of thought, an activity of critical and comprehensive thought... an activity which responds to society's demand for wisdom... bringing together all that we know in order to obtain what we value..." (Pecorino, 1985). Taken from the position of philosophy as critical and comprehensive thought it implies that the process conception of philosophy involves, among other things:

- Resolving confusion
- Unmasking assumptions
- Testing positions
- Correcting distortions
- Looking for reasons
- Questioning conceptual frameworks
- Broadening experience and dispelling ignorance
- Exploring values
- Fixing beliefs by rational inquiry
- Questing for wisdom (Pecorino, 1985).

To do the above involves asking questions of a special kind about fundamental human problems and then to grapple with them in a precise and accurate way. Philosophising thus involves the articulation and enunciation of some unspoken knowledge; implicit and inferred in human experience. This demands time and a certain level of mental development of the individual. But, the question is: Can all people, including children, meet the demands of philosophising? I argue that not all persons are given to the process of philosophising. Philosophy, in the above categorisation, is not to be confused with its end product. For instance, it is not the questions and issues that define philosophy. Rather it is the way in which they are dealt with or thought about. It is more about the method of doing philosophy, which, like most activities, requires practice to excel at it. Unlike the worldview conception discussed in the previous section that pays special attention to the historical production of philosophic thoughts, philosophy as a process returns to the Socratic marketplace where the method of inquiry and skill of reasoning are most demanded. Similarly, Nagel (1987) argues that "...the common concern of philosophy is to question and understand very common ideas that all of us

use every day without thinking about them” (p. 5). Philosophy will raise fundamental and profound questions about experience so as to explore its meaning and construct from it a coherent approximation of ultimate truth. While philosophy asks questions and offers answers, it does not provide answers which wipe out the initial questions. Instead, it allows us to live with them rationally. While philosophical answers do not solve questions about the existential situation, they assist us in transforming and broadening our own personal view of the world. In justifying the inquisitive character of human being, Savater (2002) has come to the conclusion that “For what is man if not an animal that asks questions and will go on asking them, even after all imaginable answers have been given” (p. 7). The question then is: If all human beings have a proclivity to question reality, are all questions that they ask philosophical? The philosophical questions will remain contestable and insoluble. So, are children capable of asking philosophical questions; ask questions and find answers through critical and rigorous reflection? In short, are children capable of doing philosophy, given the above characterisation of philosophy? This leads me to distinguish the process view of philosophy from most academic disciplines, as demonstrated in its two discernible manifestations: the *professional* practice of philosophical inquiry, and the *amateur* practice of philosophical inquiry.

The professional practice of philosophy, which sometimes is referred to as academic philosophy, involves not only grappling with philosophical questions from scratch but accommodates analysing the solutions past philosophers have given to the challenges of their time. For instance, a professional philosopher will attend to some assumptions, beliefs, and doctrines and thoughts that have been handled by thinkers in their tradition or even in traditions that transcend their cultures. For instance, a professional philosopher will subject African thoughts and beliefs to critical scrutiny through rigorous, systematic argumentation as will be shown in Chapter 2. On this view, philosophy becomes a critical, rigorous, systematic and consistent method of engaging with previously held “knowledge”. Such a perspective of philosophy is usually the dominant one and the most prestigious one practised in universities and colleges. As

Estarellas (2007) puts it, "...in the contemporary world, philosophy as a practice enjoys great health, at least within the boundaries of universities" (n.p.) and this enables it (philosophy) to exist as a relatively free activity. Professional philosophy view has often been criticised for growing apart from life coupled with its increasingly abstract interests away from societal problems. This is despite academic philosophers continuing to produce easily defensible and practically relevant works that draw the attention of a wide readership. Non-philosophers have often accused philosophy of being a perfect example of ivory towerism and irrelevance due to its "...preoccupation with abstract theoretical concerns, with elitism, *a priorism*, and uninvolvement in the practical affairs of life" (Gyekye, 1997, p. 3); what Onyewuenyi (1991) refers to as "an academic and dehumanised philosophy... highly abstract, lifeless and artificial, emptied of real content... (*where*) thinking overshadowed existence" (p. 35). In addition, philosophy as a discipline is often criticised for being an exclusive intellectual activity that only excites intellectual well-being of its practitioners. But, is this the model an African Philosophy for Children should take after? I will return to this question in Part 2 and Part 3 of this study.

While a philosopher, generally, may be concerned with facts and practices of life, the professional philosopher operates at a rarefied and abstract level. In addition, nearly all philosophers hold their philosophies as joint works with those who initially inspired or provoked them. On such an account, a genuine philosophical investigation is initiated by puzzlement at the enunciations of other philosophies and philosophers. Most of the philosophers come to see new ideas or style of philosophy only as a result of reacting to the thoughts or products of some other past or contemporary thinkers or persons. In Part 2 of this study, the professional philosophy perspective explored above is not what the American philosopher/educationist Matthew Lipman promulgated. The Philosophy for Children in Africa that I make a case for will involve working on the cultural experiences of Africa, from the traditional to the modern through to the postmodern. To this end, Singer (1995) uses the methodological perspective to define philosophy as a

method of enquiring into very fundamental questions that do not yield to the methods of science. Persistent quest for answers leads to more questions being asked.

The model that locates the raw material of philosophy directly in the world and the relations human beings have with their world is sometimes referred to as amateur philosophy: an antonym to the professional model. The model posits the activity of philosophising as being engaged in without necessarily having to refer to the canon of philosophical ideas already existing and crucially, too, without being employed as a philosopher. In this regard, Savater (2002) proposes that philosophy is “... an intellectual exercise, not a collection of witty remarks...(or) a catalogue of celebrated views” (p. xii). Nor is it simply repetition of other people’s thoughts. Hence the conclusion that if philosophy is to be studied..., it should not only be for the sake of any definite answers to its questions but for the sake of the questions themselves as well (Russell, 1998). Questions expand our conception of what is possible, augment our intellectual imagination and reduce the dogmatic assurance which closes the mind against speculation (Russell, 1998). This will be illustrated in Part 3. However, this position does not deny that philosophers may consciously use others’ ideas to support their own.

The above description is an attempt to define philosophy in terms of “doing”. However, it is noteworthy to observe that this formal way of doing philosophy acknowledges that we cannot treat “having” a philosophy and “doing” philosophy as independent of each other. I argue that if there was no philosophy (or bluntly worldview) in the personal sense then there would be nothing on which we can employ criticism and reflection, that is, *do* philosophy. Hence worldviews are not philosophies. Rather, a philosophical attitude is characterised by tolerance of other views, criticism, inquisitiveness and open-mindedness in search of meaning. While common sense presents the raw material, philosophy is the reflective and critical activity of the mental faculty in processing the availed material. The activity of philosophy is individual in the sense that no two people

can philosophise *for* each other but rather can do philosophy *with* each other; for example, by entering in a dialogical engagement. But the common denominator between the two dimensions of the process view is the understanding that philosophy is more of an activity that utilises unique skills and methods of thinking to provide practical advice for living (Morris, 1999) with reflection as the most outstanding method of doing philosophy. In my exploration of the notion of Philosophy *for* Children, I refer to such an activity as the *doing* of philosophy *with* children as opposed to *teaching* children philosophy.

Given the two definitions of the process view of philosophy, that is, philosophy as doing, what implications for education can we draw from them? Academic (professional) philosophy is usually the didactic philosophy taught in universities and colleges in which students learn and interpret texts written by great thinkers — past or present. If well executed, this didactic philosophy view does help users to recognise what others have written about philosophical problems at the expense of involving themselves in the engagement of the problems on their own. Hence, Schopenhauer (1985) has observed that:

The man who thinks for himself becomes acquainted with the authorities for his opinions only after he has acquired them and merely as a confirmation of them, while a book philosopher starts with his authorities, in that he constructs his opinions by collecting together the opinions of others; his mind then compares with that of the former as an automaton compares with a living man... This is what determines the difference between a thinker and a mere scholar (p. 91).

This stresses the value philosophy has not only for adults but for younger members of society, that is, children.

As a reaction to the professional perspective of philosophy in schools, the amateur philosophical view draws on the Socratic dialectic originating from Socrates'

engagement in argumentation in a persistent and unrelenting analysis of any subject. This position of philosophy explains philosophy not as revealed knowledge by someone who knows everything to someone who knows nothing but rather occurs in an environment of mutuality in which participants "...become accomplices in their mutual submission to the forces of reasons and their mutual rejection of the reasons of force" (Savater, 2002). This is a form of disciplined conversation in which the most commonly accepted position is exposed to a dialogical process with the outcome being a clearer position of the meaning. Of most significance is development of thought through the interplay of ideas. Thus, this perspective of philosophy is the comprehensive pursuit of an issue with sound reasoning and courage to question the conventional. In view of this, philosophy then becomes a dialogical inquiry in which participants not merely accept the views of others but listen and respond to what others think in order to live an examined life. Philosophy in this context is a communal dialogical inquiry facilitated by questioning in search of meaning. The question of philosophy as inquiry in community with others will be examined in Chapters 7 and 9.

Philosophy may also be considered as a personal attitude toward life and the universe. Such an attitude, it may be argued, makes one look at human conditions and their problems in their broad perspective or as part of a larger scheme of things. This thereby characterises a philosopher as someone who faces a state of affairs with composure and reflection, with poise and composure (Titus, 1997). A mature philosophical attitude involves a searching and critical attitude, the open-minded attitude that is expressively demonstrated in the willingness to consider all sides of the matter at hand. It includes a readiness to acknowledge life and the world as they are and to challenge them in all their relationships. In this sense then, philosophising as an activity is not merely about reading and knowing about great philosophical works but about thinking philosophically. Philosophy categorised in this way begins in a wonder, doubt and curiosity and grows out of our developing an awareness of human existential circumstances and the accompanying challenges. Hence, philosophy takes the form of a speculative attitude that does not diminish when faced with the difficult and unresolved

human problems. In short, philosophy is analytical and speculative in that it is fundamentally a critical and systematic inquiry into the basic ideas and values that underlie human thought, behaviour and practices. In terms of method, Koka (1998) points out that philosophy “interrogates, analyses and categorises concepts, testing their validity and ‘sanity’ in their representation of human life” (p. 26). In addition, Lawson (2004) proposes that philosophy is an “attempt to say the unsayable” (p. 274) by asking questions, drawing attention to flaws in conventional opinion and seeking to apply rational thought to any argument or claim. In the process of interrogation, analysis and categorisation what is illuminated is that philosophical concepts are universal and eternal and they are neither ethnic nor local. This implies that philosophical concepts in essence never change except only in interpretation and application.

Philosophy, for the Greeks, was a practice of asking questions and finding solutions to problems that are worth of satisfaction. In general this ‘love of wisdom’ refers to the tradition of thought which examines the ultimate nature of reality, the general conditions of knowing and good society, the existence of beauty and values and the nature of humanity (Juuso, 2007). In the days when Socrates discussed issues in the marketplace, philosophy was primarily about providing practical guidance for living. Despite the world’s great wisdom tradition having evolved into a variety of discourse communities, the central interest of philosophy from preSocratic times — how to think critically — remains penetrating and meaningful (Solomon, 2000). In Part 3, I will show the value of doing Philosophy for Children especially in the context of Africa.

The philosophical method is reflective and critical and therefore involves the attempt to think through one’s problems and to face the challenges posed by the universe. Although it might prescribe a rationally reflective way of life, philosophy nevertheless does not concern itself with the business of establishing well-filtered and definite doctrines to guide people’s lives. It points up alternative courses of action from which individuals can choose. Thus, philosophy has the potential to offer more for the life of

the individual (young or old) and for human society and public affairs. As implied in Plato's allegory of the cave, philosophers have the duty to return to the cave (the darkness where the majority are) to bring enlightenment to the captives so as to save them from ignorance, thereby giving philosophy an instrumental value in human affairs. However, for Socrates and Plato alike, philosophy is also an intrinsically valuable activity. The message of the allegory characterises clearly that philosophical wisdom and insight should be applied to the practical problems of human society. But, what is Philosophy for Children in Africa for? Does it have an instrumental or intrinsic value, or both? These questions will be addressed partly in Part 2 but mainly in Part 3.

1.4 Particular versus Universal Philosophy

As has been noted in the preceding discussion, there are apparent contradictions about what philosophy is, but it may be observed that philosophy itself is ambiguous. The main concern of this section is to address Van Hook's (1993) question of whether or not "...philosophy is the product of a universal human reason or is every philosophy in some significant way an expression of the culture which produces it? ... (p. 36). Bodunrin describes the question of what is to count as philosophy as a philosophical question itself (Bodunrin, 1991a). However, it must be acknowledged that the particular focus of philosophy is on thinking by keeping an eye on the thinking process, that is, it is thinking about thinking. Philosophy designates, on the one hand, as Janz (2004) sees it, a collection of reflective thinking procedures founded in culture and reason, which rigorously and critically elucidate a life-world. In addition, philosophy is the pursuit to discover the implicit assumptions that we operate on; to consider those assumptions critically; and to improve upon those assumptions by replacing them with enhanced options. Does the relevance of the ideas, insights, arguments and conclusions of philosophers who belong to a particular epoch, culture or societies remain tethered to those times, cultures or societies? To answer this question one needs to turn to whether one perceives philosophical ideas or doctrines as particular, that is, as relative and relevant only to the times and cultures that conceived them, or as universal, that is as going beyond the times and cultures that produced them. I will specifically situate this debate in the context of Philosophy for Children in Africa in Part 3 of this research.

The particularistic attitude recognises the cultural roots of any philosophical system by arguing that all thought is situated in and influenced by its cultural context. One particularist who rejects philosophy as having a universal character is Anyanwu (1987), who insisted that "... philosophy is relative to its basic assumption about the nature of experienced reality as well as its epistemological attitude or method... And furthermore, different assumptions and models of experienced reality lead to different philosophical doctrines" (p. 237). In the preceding quotation, Anyanwu seems to be contradicting himself, especially when he considers the relativity of philosophy. Is this piece of philosophy not particular to the agent(s)? If it is also *relative* then why anyone else ought to be impressed by it? If on the other hand Anyanwu takes it to be universal, then he contradicts with himself.

The tendency to reflect on philosophical questions is part of human nature and it is rooted in man's natural proclivity to know and is informed by the instinct to curiosity. Philosophy is related to culture in the sense in which the philosopher looks at the world from the standpoint of the beliefs and conditions of his life, including those of his people and culture. In addition, Osuagwu (2005) citing *Okere's Trilogy of African Philosophy* describes the relationship between philosophy and culture and views culture as "the necessary background, ingredient, raw material, vessel, source, nourishment of philosophy" (p. 15). However, cultural particulars are not exclusive of the non-culturally determined criteria (Sogolo, 1993). There are universally shared sets of criteria which are common core to human thought and practice. I will argue in detail, in Chapter 9, that an African perspective Philosophy for Children should be an interpretation of the African cultural experience.

Given that philosophy is embroidered by a variety of experiences of different cultures, a variety of philosophical assumptions emerge from the complex universe. It is from the

diverse world of cultures that philosophical questions surface. Questions about human suffering, death, the meaning of human life, for instance, will come to human thought after the suffering, pain and death of a relative or friend. This implies that particular lived experiences can invoke questions of universal philosophical concern. As Odera Oruka (1989) argues:

That philosophy is universal does not mean that all the philosophers must have similar methods in philosophy, neither does it mean that all rationally warrantable or objectively granted principles or methods must be identical or that they must establish similar truths. Two separate philosophical methods, both being rational, can be opposed to each other. Similarly, two methods of philosophical inquiry, both using rationally granted and warrantable principles, can come to dissimilar truths (p.134).

Worth noting here is that the themes dealt with in philosophy are universal. How the different cultures trace, interpret and synthesise, and in the end put order and meaning to these themes will differ from culture to culture. On this view, Onyewuenyi concludes that “No culture has *the* order or *the* last word” (Onyewuenyi, 1991, p. 38). If what we have said is acceptable, it is possible to talk of a philosophy in a particular context, for example European Philosophy, Asian Philosophy or African Philosophy. This implies that each context has its own way of establishing order. Hence Hegel concludes that:

“Human beings do not, in certain epochs, merely philosophise in general but there is a definite philosophy which arises among a people and a definite character which filters through the history of the people, is most intimately related to them, thereby constituting their foundation” (Hegel, 1892-1896n.p.).

While there is the difference of approach between one group of philosophers seeing philosophy in terms of its special *method* and the other in terms of the themes and topics it deals with (*content*), they are united in the belief that philosophy has an important intellectual purpose in the context of present-day society. Hence, there may be alternate ways of doing philosophy with children as will be discussed in later chapters of the research.

The universalistic view holds that philosophy everywhere shares certain features, concerns and characteristics. This point is underlined by Bodunrin (1991a) who holds that “philosophy must have the same meaning in all cultures although the subjects that receive priority and perhaps the method of dealing with them may be dictated by cultural biases and the existential situation within which the philosophers operate” (p.64-65). The universalistic thesis thus maintains that the relevance of philosophical ideas and thoughts can transcend the limits of the times and places of their authors that produced them. This could be justified by the fact that, irrespective of their cultures and histories, human beings share certain basic values. Values such as friendship, happiness, respect for human life and avoidance of painful experiences are good examples. Although human experiences or problems may not be shared by all human beings, the fundamental everyday goals of humanity can be said to be held, ultimately, in common by all. Consequently, irrespective of people’s cultural backgrounds, they are bound to be interested in engaging in philosophical inquiry into such values. Gyekye comes to the conclusion that:

... the historical-cultural moorings of philosophical ideas and proposals are sufficient evidence of their particularity and of the inappropriateness of applying them universally to other cultures or societies, that those ideas — and the problems that gave rise to them — derive from experiences that are specific to cultures or historical situations, and that, consequently, philosophers unavoidably focus attention on issues and problems that interest them or relate to the experiences of their particular cultures and histories, unconcerned seriously to engage reflectively on the problems and issues of other peoples and cultures (Gyekye, 1997, p. 28)

In sum, any philosophy of a particular culture, like all philosophies produced elsewhere, is characterised by both universality and particularity. There are certain universal values such as the sanctity of human life and truth telling and likewise culturally dependent priorities. Any philosophy as shown above is concerned with interrogating common

values irrespective of their places of origin as well as sociocultural experiences peculiar to a people.

1.5 Critique and summary

As has been observed in the discussion above, the question, “what is philosophy?” is itself a philosophical question to which a universally acceptable answer is difficult, but not impossible, to find. The portraits of philosophy examined above demonstrate that it is easier to do philosophy than discuss it, and to talk about it in some other way than to produce a precise, generally agreed definition. However, philosophers engage themselves in the enterprise of philosophising whether or not it leads to any consensual conclusions. The definitions of philosophy mainly fall into two broad categories, namely philosophy as a technical/academic discipline: philosophy as a process; and philosophy as a worldview — a product. The first category considers philosophy as a technical discipline in which our world is subjected to rigorous and systematic scrutiny to gain a better and clearer understanding. In the second category (the less strict sense), philosophy is conceived as the way we view ourselves and the world, our attitude to life or generally our world outlook. In this sense, philosophy is what one has or believes while in the first sense it is conceived as an activity.

In the criteria for defining philosophy, we find philosophers differentiating themselves along the two categories. For example, philosophers who consent to philosophy as a people’s world outlook are often criticised for accepting a mere description of these worldviews as philosophy. While such critics appreciate that philosophy can be constructed out of a people’s world outlook, they nonetheless insist that the people’s worldviews are the stock-in-trade which must be subjected to what Wiredu (1992) calls “a systematic scrutiny by rigorous ratiocinative methods” (p. 40) for philosophy to grow out of them. This view of philosophy as a critical activity whose functions include the questioning of its own nature and meaning is undeniably a legacy of the Greek philosophers (Oyeshile, 2008), starting with Socrates and subsequently Plato. This has since formed the central focus of Western philosophy which has persuaded *the*

definition of philosophy to not only concern itself with the content of thought but also with its own self-definition as an activity engaged with both. In this context, philosophy, like physics, chemistry and mathematics, is a specific abstract discipline with its own demands and procedures. But, I have a difficulty with this form of argumentation. Does it follow that all philosophical approaches must be forced into accepting this definition? What about Bodunrin's (1991) claim that there is no one method which is *the* method of philosophy today? How does Hountondji's (1983b) definition of philosophy as "any kind of wisdom, individual or collective, any set of principles presenting some degree of coherence... intended to govern the daily practice of a man or a people" (p. 47) suit the definition? Clearly, this does not deny that some assertions and definitions may relatively and simply be better than others.

Perhaps the question "what is philosophy" could be resolved by engaging ourselves in a family of questions, including:

- What activity is properly referred to as philosophising?
- What sort of a person is actually called a philosopher?
- What sort of tradition is properly called a tradition of philosophising?
- Can a thought system be justifiably called a philosophy or a philosophical system?

I agree with Sogolo (1993) that a combination of answers to these questions is necessary to enlighten us on the nature of philosophy, rather than a single definition. The question of philosophy's meaning does not rest on some all-embracing abstract definition individually attached to one method or aim, but rather to a variety of concrete and precise deliberations. Against this backdrop, I argue against those who use a singular criterion to deny a particular tradition of philosophy as an enterprise of philosophy itself. Simultaneously it would be fair and honest not to dismiss some philosophical tradition(s) as non-existent and non-philosophical on the basis that they do not fit wholly into the criteria by the deciding perspective. The question then is: Is analytical rigour the telescope and yardstick through which we can see and measure all

other traditions of philosophy? Conversely, can a tradition of thoughts or worldviews fit into the definition of what philosophy is? More broadly, is it defensible to leave the question of philosophy to the mercy of doubt, without any defining criteria?

In addition to the above questions that seek to define the boundaries of what fits into the scope of philosophy, Janz (2004) questions the role of *place* as a criterion of philosophy. He asks:

- Is philosophical thought unaffected by the place in which it is practised?
- Can philosophy be conducted “in place”?
- Are there inhospitable places for philosophy... (for *example*) a refugee or concentration camp?
- Is philosophy appropriate to all places? (and)
- Can philosophy attend to a place and still remain philosophical (p. 104)?

The issue of place cuts to the heart of the question of what philosophy is, as will be seen later in this study.

The above questions raise issues about the universality or particularity of philosophy. The discussion in this chapter has pointed out that the professional/academic view of philosophy as a process submits, on the one hand, that philosophy is abstract and universal and therefore is philosophy everywhere, regardless of place. On the other hand, the particularists view philosophy as originating in a culture, in a setting in which the worldviews, beliefs and existential circumstances of a people become the stock-in-trade of the philosopher. But, the common denominator that both perspectives hold is that philosophy is a process, whether particular or universal, and what vary may be methods of doing philosophy. I draw on Janz’s comprehensive questions to explore the concept of an African perspective of Philosophy for Children. As the study unfolds, the philosophical question of what philosophy is will be deployed in more practical settings.

The definitions, explanations and illustrations of the nature, purpose and character as well as challenges of philosophy discussed in this chapter will inform discussion in the chapters that follow. I will discuss in Chapter 2 the concept of an African philosophy to situate an African perspective of Philosophy for Children.

Chapter 2: The African Philosophy Debate

2.1 Introduction

One of the propelling forces and challenges behind the enterprise of African philosophy throughout its documented short history and since its initiation in the academic and written form can be stated as follows: Is there in pre-colonial Africa a tradition of philosophy on which contemporary efforts can be established? There are and have been complicated and many-sided attempts by African philosophers to unravel the fundamental nature of African philosophy. Thinkers of all persuasions, Western or non-Western, Christian or secular, have ventured into the domain of what African Philosophy¹ is (Eze, 1998; Gyekye, 1997; Hountondji, 1983b; Masolo, 1994, p. 3; Menkiti, 1984; Temples, 1959; Wiredu, 1997; Wiredu, 1980). Just like the philosophical questions that attempt to inquire the meaning of philosophy, the African philosophy question in itself demands answers by asking:

- Does African philosophy exist?
- Is there a distinctly African Philosophy?
- Can Africans as a people philosophise?

Philosophers have not agreed on the precise definition of philosophy as discussed in Chapter 1, and similarly scholars in the field of African philosophy have failed to

¹ Early literature on African philosophy was focused on the questions, “Is there an African Philosophy?” and “How African Philosophy should be defined?” See, for example, Momoh, C (1985) “*African Philosophy: Does it exist?*”; Diop, A & Okpewho, I (1981) “*The Search for a Philosophy of African Culture*”, Wiredu, (1972) “*On an African Orientation in Philosophy*”, Odera Oruka, H. (1975) “*The Fundamental Principles in the Question of African Philosophy*”, Onyewuenyi, I. “*Is There an African Philosophy?*”

unilaterally reach a consensus to answers to the foregoing questions. African philosophy has been entangled with what Masolo (1994) refers to as “the search for identity” in order for African philosophy to know its own self. Further, debates have been raging about the best method for retrieving the tradition of philosophy from the indigenous cultures of Africa despite the absence of documentary evidence within those cultures.

The primary focus of the chapter is to consider the philosophical underpinnings of African philosophy as it forms the basis of doing philosophy with children. To understand this more clearly, however, there is a need to examine some of the insights that scholars on African philosophy have put forward. I frame my case on Henry Odera Oruka’s proposition of the four trends in African philosophy and I find all other claims made by other scholars revolving around the former. I will not attempt to get to the bottom of the debate of the African philosophy question, but will review the thinking of some select scholars offering, where appropriate, some evaluative reflections on the debate. I will engage with the following questions: What is African, what then is African philosophy, and, in the final analysis, is it possible? But, of much significance to this study is the question of relevance of African philosophy to children in Africa: What is the value of African philosophy to the modern day 21st century child in Africa?

2.2 What is Africa, African and Africanness?

I begin by defining Africa as an invention, a human existential construction located in history. Ubiquitous as it may be, the phrase *invention of Africa* is highlighted in V.Y. Mudimbe’s (1988) *The Invention of Africa: Philosophy and the Order of Knowledge* and Terence Ranger’s (1983) essay “*The Invention of Tradition in Colonial Africa*”. However, it is necessary to point out that it is problematic to arrive at a precise definition of “Africa” given the multifarious genealogies and denotations attached to it. As Zeleza puts it, “...any explorations of what makes ‘Africa’ ‘African’ are often quite slippery as these notions tend to swing unsteadily between poles of existentialism and contingency” (Zeleza, 2006 p. 14). Existentialism is a philosophy that stresses the individuality and separation of the personal experience in a hostile or uncaring universe. It also

emphasises freedom of choice and responsibility for the consequences of one's acts. Contingency in this context implies the state of relying on or being controlled by someone or something else. Hence, Africa, in Zeleza's (2006) view, is caught in between its individual existence and independence or remaining an appendage and dependent of the former colonisers. I argue in support of those who have proposed that Africa is a human construct; an invention whose geographical, historical and cultural boundaries have been shifting in relation to the existential conceptions and arrangements of the global power relations as well as African nationalism. Maps of individual territories have been shifting and reconfiguring in the 20th and 21st centuries as a reaction to globalisation and pan-African projects such as the African Union (AU), Southern African Development Community (SADC) and Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) to name but a few. However, Wole Soyinka has defined "Africa" and "African" in terms of their rootedness in indigenous language, thereby demanding that Africa be labelled "black" and confined to the sub-Saharan zone that is predominantly inhabited by people of black-skin pigment (Soyinka, 1977). In the same light, Zeleza (2006) suggests that Africa was "a European imperial construct" that increasingly separated the rest of continent from its original North African coding, thereby giving rise to what Afrocentrists now call "the real Africa", i.e. Africa South of the Sahara or sub-Saharan Africa.

The question "where is Africa?" can best be addressed geographically, by referring to Africa as "...the second-largest continent; located south of Europe and bordered to the west by the South Atlantic and to the east by the Indian Ocean" (Hirsch, Kett, & Trefill, 2002, p. 357). The geographical entity called "Africa" exists and as a result geography has been used by philosophers Mudimbe and Hountondji to define some intellectual product as African if it is produced or promoted by people who originate and inhabit within the borders of the geographical definition (Hountondji, 1983b, 1985; Mudimbe, 1988). This clearly invites the question: "who is African?", which is a question of African identity. Who counts as an African, and what does it involve to be African? Janz goes on to ask, "Is being African in some way unique and qualitatively different

from other ways of being members of the human species?” (Janz, n.d., p. 9). Okafor posits that when we talk of Africa, what immediately comes to mind is the black race (Okafor, 1997). But, what is the place of race in Africanity? The issue that provokes further questioning in the context of this study then is: Can we use the above criteria to label the activity of doing philosophy with children in Africa “an African Philosophy for Children”? This problem will be the focus of my attention in Chapters 8 and 9.

Given the above criteria for calling something African, further questions arise. What are the sources and foundations of calling anything African? Are there some texts that form the tradition of something being named “African”? Having made an attempts at establishing criteria that different thinkers have put forward about what philosophy is in Chapter 1, and what Africa is and what it is to be African in the foregoing section, my question is: “ What is African philosophy?”. The section that follows will attempt to address this controversial issue.

2.3 What is African Philosophy?

The issue of an African philosophy is burdened with many difficulties and its brief history is marked by some progress, though “...punctuated by fluctuations, oscillations, and occasional regressions” (Okafor, 1997, p. 251). The celebrated work of Father Placide Temples, who authored *Bantu Philosophy* (1943), marked the first emergence of written literature on African philosophy. In effect, one may say that this initiative became an intellectual stimulus that activated what may then be said to be the dominant philosophical thought in Africa. As Hountondji puts it, Temples’ book opened up “floodgates to a deluge of essays aimed to reconstruct... a specific worldview commonly attributed to all Africans and claiming to be *philosophical* through an interpretation of customs and traditions, proverbs and institutions... concerning the cultural lives of the African peoples” (Hountondji, 1983a, p. 34). Many more questions arise each time one attempts a concise definition of African philosophy. I agree with Makinde (2007)’s observation that Africans and non-Africans, alike, involve themselves in an unnecessary quest for the identity of an African philosophy and that instead “we

should show it, do it, rather than talking about it, or engaging in endless talks about it.” Hence, he argues that instead of questioning the identity of an Africa philosophy we should instead be philosophising about philosophy in Africa, which this study seeks to do, especially with reference to children in Africa.

One of the regular features of trained philosophers, African or non-African, through all epochs has been to assume that to practise philosophy is to allow the subject a unique know-how as discussed in the discourse on academic, professional philosophy in Chapter 1. The traditional image of a philosopher is being a wise and perceptive thinker with the ability to surpass the reality that the ordinary person can see (Oguejiofor, 2007). As a result, philosophy was, and in many circles is, viewed as an entitlement of a select few: exceptional individuals who have risen to the towers inaccessible to the majority. Against this academic version of the definition of philosophy, “...questions about African Philosophy’s existence by non-Africans have often amounted to an implicit dismissal of Africa” (Janz, 2007, p. 689). Meanwhile, many other African philosophers have contributed to what has remained a vigorous debate over the proper role of oral traditions in African philosophy (Appiah, 1992; Imbo, 2002; Masolo, 1994; Mudimbe, 1988; Wiredu, 1980). In Chapter 9, I will explore the place of African orality in doing philosophy with children in Africa.

The role of Western influence on African philosophy is notable in the forerunners of African philosophy who themselves are intellectual products of alien Western cultures. Such scholars do and have done philosophy in alien languages, using alien conceptions, especially in English, French and allied European languages. This state of affairs implies that philosophical problems familiar to such foreign-trained philosophers are hidden in alien concepts. But, how do we accommodate the assertion that different people have different ways of interpreting reality? Understandably, the African philosopher, dosed up with alien theoretical categories in French, English or German, is no longer confident of the direction to follow. To this end, philosophers in Africa have often categorised themselves along certain trends of thought or perspectives. As will be shown in the next section, each trend will seek to justify its presence in defining what

African Philosophy is. Below I discuss what Henry Odera Oruka has referred to as “ the four trends in African philosophy” (Odera Oruka, 1981) or rather the six trends (he adds a further two trends later(Odera Oruka, 1990b)).

2.4 Trends in African Philosophy

Before examining what philosophers on African philosophy say about the subject, I find it pertinent to start from Paulin Hountondji’s position of denial. In his article, *Histoire d’un mythe* (1974), he presents six main arguments against the claim that African philosophy already and popularly exists. First, he argues that by proposing an African philosophy we are playing into the hands of colonialists and racists who insist that the African is different from the European. Therefore, any reference to African philosophy forces us to define Africa with respect to Europe (Hountondji, 1974, p. 4). Second, he defines philosophy as a scientific, abstract and individual discipline just like physics, algebra and linguistics, which cannot be taken for common beliefs, traditional practices and a collection of and uninformed behaviour which, to him, is typical of African Philosophy. Third, Hountondji holds that African philosophy is preceded by and dependent on myths, doctrine and conventional worldviews, yet philosophy does not grow out of the myths completely but is constitutionally opposed to it. As shown in Chapter 1, Hountondji is quite clear in separating worldview from philosophy. In the fourth case, he maintains that African philosophy has been a European scheme that aimed at adhering to African traditions and civilisation in the past. Hence, in the words of Ruch and Anyanwu, such a construct “tried to kill the Africans’ creative power to produce philosophical ideas and debates” (Ruch & Anyanwu, 1981, p. 12). African philosophers were relegated to being “archivists of their cultural traditions” (ibid) rather than original thinkers in their own right. In his fifth objection, Hountondji states that the African Philosophy construct embodies an entire cultural heritage that is nothing but a re-creation. In this case such a philosophy restricts itself exclusively to a backward look at past traditions. Yet, according to Hountondji, philosophy should involve a creative confrontation of individual thoughts in the present and the future. Lastly, he contends that this creative activity must be the work of Africans themselves since “the true problem does not lie in speaking about Africa, but in discussing among Africans...

and the liberating the theoretical activity of our peoples... by giving it the means of expressing themselves effectively... by means of a free discussion” (Odera Oruka, 1991, pp. 7-9)

Notable in Hountondji’s analysis is the notion of cultural thought that typifies traditional African worldviews which involve “... ontological, social, and moral views about the relationships among objects, among people and between people and objects” (Parker & Kalumba, 1996, p. 3). While a worldview can be a synthesis of different beliefs of different people, probably through self-critical reflection, I agree with Parker and Kalumba that “once developed... a worldview tends to be passed from one generation to another... without critical reflection” (ibid). The question then is: Is cultural thought, whether African or American, philosophy? Can cultural thought as stored in the literature on Greek philosophy or the great works of early British philosophers be philosophy? If these works are to be studied, in what realm are they: a study of history of philosophical ideas or the practice of philosophy? In the context of this study I interrogate the plausibility of traditional African thought as philosophy in the academic sense. I ask: should traditional African thoughts and practices as philosophical enterprises deserve academic study or should they be reformed and modified to suit the present existential circumstances? I will argue in Chapter 9 that an African perspective of Philosophy for Children should be an interpretation of the African existential circumstances, including African cultures.

In the sections that follow, I examine what Henry Odera Oruka describes as the [six](#) trends of African philosophy. But, to understand Odera Oruka’s point more clearly, I locate the discussion in two conceptions of African philosophy. The first one consists in merely “collecting, interpreting and disseminating African proverbs, folk tales, myths, and other traditional material of a philosophical tendency” (Wiredu, 1980, pp. 3-4). The second underlines and takes cognisance of modern developments in knowledge and techniques in reflection. The latter view of African philosophy is a joint venture and product of the traditional and modern philosophers (Kaphagawani, 1998). This involves philosophers of different perspectives holding divergent world outlooks, employing

different methods of doing philosophy in debates about different cultures. Odera Oruka classified more elaborately, works by African thinkers into perspectives; in his words, trends. These include a) ethnophilosophy b) philosophic sagacity c) nationalist-ideological philosophy and d) professional philosophy. I situate a) and b) in the first conception while c) and d) can be allocated to the second, as categorised earlier. Towards the end of Odera Oruka's life, he added two more trends namely 5) Literary-Artistic Philosophy and 6) Hermeneutic Philosophy. Each group of African thinkers seeks to demonstrate the characteristics of its perspective.

2.5 Ethnophilosophy

The ethnophilosophy orientation conceives African philosophy as a description and communal thought drawing from the categories of European philosophy "...to prove that the African has some reason, he can philosophise, and he has some kind of philosophy" (Njoku, 2004, p. 114). The aim of such a construct is to systematise and document different worldviews of African peoples. As Akafor puts it, "African philosophy from its beginning sees its role as probing the various areas of African life, institutions, language, customs etc" (Okafor, 1997, p. 257). According to Serequeberhan, African philosophy is "...incarnated in the mythical/religious conceptions, worldviews, and lived ritual practices of ethnic Africans, which can be documented by Europeans and Africans with a Western education"(Serequeberhan, 1991b, p. 17). In a way, ethnophilosophy is a 'culture philosophy', one that presents itself as "a philosophy of *peoples* rather than *individuals*" (Hallen, 2010, p. 75) . As opposed to considering philosophy as a body of logically argued thoughts of individuals, ethnophilosophers view African philosophy as collective thought and cite its appeal to emotion as one of its peculiar characteristics. What ethnophilosophers have managed to posit as African Philosophy is "...an interpretation of the customs and traditions, proverbs and institutions... concerning the cultural life of African people" (Hountondji 1983b:34), enshrined in, among others, oral cultural by-products such as parables, proverbs, poetry, songs and oral literature in general. Portrayed in this sense, ethnophilosophy, thus, is inclined to present ethnic beliefs as things that are static and although spatially confined thereby stressing minimal emphasis on a rigorous argumentation and criticism in its search for truth.

Doing ethnophilosophy involves engaging in the interpretation of the African worldview or the presentation of the thought system and the way of thinking of a particular community or the whole of a cultural region. I hold that if ethnophilosophy becomes the activity of interpreting the said cultural products, then there is no use relegating it to the dustbin. On this view, doing ethnophilosophy is philosophising on the non-philosophy.

On the representative “African” side of ethnophilosophy is a list of philosophers who uphold that traditional African worldviews represent a genuine framework for defining African philosophy. These include Kwame (1992)², Gyekye (1989, 1997), Anyanwu (1989), Mbiti (1970) and Kaphagawani (1998). But Mbiti and Kagame, being men of the collar, might have misconceived the form and function of philosophy as corresponding to religious models by implying that African philosophy is “...a permanent and stable system of beliefs, allowing of no evolution, always identical to itself, impermeable to time and to history...” (Kebede, 1999, p. 8). This implies to me that the two erroneously came to the conclusion that no indigenous person had the frame of mind, let alone the tendency to detach him/herself from the prevailing established beliefs, taboos, and offer a critical assessment of such beliefs.

However, ethnophilosophy as anthropological perspective (as proposed by Fr. P. Temples, Alex Kagame and others) has been blamed by modern African thinkers as the source of “othering” African Philosophy by assuming that “there is a way of thinking to a conceptual framework that is *uniquely* African and which is at the same time radically unEuropean” (Odera Oruka, 1981, p. 1). This view projects that ethnophilosophy is the cultural thoughts of traditional Africa, communally produced and possessed; and describes the worldview of the sub-Saharan African people. Such a conception of

² See Safo Kwame *How not to teach African Philosophy* (Kwame, 1992)

philosophy considers African philosophy to be “...the individual views hidden under a collective veil and identified with an ethnic group... a philosophy which, instead of presenting its own rational justification, shelters lazily behind the authority of a tradition and projects its own theses and beliefs on to that tradition” (Kebede, 1999, n.p.). Critics of ethnophilosophy consider it to be a European construct attached to other Europeans’ thinking in which the Africans have no part to play and appear only as objects or pretexts. Presenting such materials as cultural anthropology would suit well the criterion set by critics like Hountondji. But, to introduce them as representatives of African philosophy would be an unjustified denial of the critical, reflective and rational content in African thought and philosophy. To do this is tantamount to surrendering philosophy and philosophies from outside Africa to celebrate distinctiveness; making such enterprises *the only* philosophy that Africa and Africans must embrace. Hence, the central objective of ethnophilosophy was to describe the main features of African civilisation by denigrating them for the benefit of Europe. The question then is why the ethnic camouflage? At the same time, are there no traits embedded in tradition that are worth courting? Can we completely discard the traditional thoughts and how they were arrived at without subjecting them to some systematic, critical and creative evaluation to suit the present-day priorities? I will argue in Chapter 9 for a reinterpretation of ethnophilosophy as one of the forms of doing philosophy with children in the 21st century. I will argue that to do philosophy in the present there is need to embrace some of the ethnophilosophical practices of African tradition. Odera Oruka acknowledges the indebtedness of professional philosophy and philosophic sagacity to ethnophilosophy by observing that “...even those of us in Africa who currently claim to be on the right track on the question of African philosophy have been helped in no mean way in adopting this position by provocation of ethnophilosophy” (Odera Oruka, 1991, p. 57).

But, the question is: Should ethnophilosophy constitute the umbrella conception definition of a philosophy worth courting in doing philosophy with children in the 21st century Africa? If so, what form should it take? This will be addressed in the Part 3 of

this study. I now turn to Odera Oruka's philosophic sagacity trend as we seek to define African philosophy.

2.6 Philosophic Sagacity

This term was coined by Odera Oruka to describe reflective evaluation of thought not by a collective but by an individual African elder who is a storehouse of wisdom, knowledge and rigorous critical thinking. Odera Oruka established this approach in preference to ethnophilosophy. He proposed that sage philosophy "...is a way of thinking and explaining the world that fluctuates between *popular wisdom* (well known communal maxims, aphorisms, and general common sense truths) and *didactic wisdom*, an expounded wisdom and a rational thought of some given individuals within a community" (Odera-Oruka, 1990b, p. 28). Philosophic sagacity proposes a new conception and methodology of African philosophy that reconciles the limitations of ethnophilosophy discussed above and standpoint of professional philosophy that will be explored in the later part of this chapter. As Odera Oruka states, philosophic sagacity claims "...to trace African philosophy by wearing the uniforms of anthropological fieldwork and using dialogical techniques to pass through anthropological fogs to the philosophical ground" (Odera-Oruka, 1990b, p. 3). This trend is similar to ethnophilosophy in that they both use anthropological research for evidence. However, while the latter employs "...non-dialogical techniques, (*and*) fails to break through the anthropological fogs" (Ochieng'-Odhiambo, 2006, p. 18), the former goes on to use dialogical techniques to raise itself to the philosophical level. Philosophic sagacity and professional philosophy share the same tenets in that both use the methods of dialogue. Yet, their divergence is found in philosophic sagacity's embeddedness in cultural research before rising to the philosophical level, while professional philosophy operates more or less exclusively at the philosophical level. I therefore locate philosophic sagacity between the ethnophilosophical and professional philosophical trends.

Odera Oruka (1990b) insists that African cultures had always had their own philosophers, sometimes as wise men, what he referred to as sages. He provides a

distinctive analysis of the notion of philosophic sagacity against the folk sagacity as he writes:

Some sages.... attain a philosophic sagacity. As sages, they are versed in the beliefs and wisdoms of their people. However, as thinkers, they are rationally critical and they opt for or recommend only those aspects of the beliefs and wisdoms which satisfy their rational scrutiny. In this respect, they are potentially or contemporarily in clash with the diehard adherents of the prevailing common beliefs. Such sages are also capable of conceiving and rationally recommending ideas offering alternatives to the commonly accepted opinions and practices (p. 44).

Despite the differences in tagging, philosophic sagacity attempts to articulate the thoughts, ideas and views of individual Africans reputed for outstanding wisdom, by presenting them as authentic philosophy. As Odera-Oruka (1987) informs us, the real purpose of his research into sage philosophy was “...to help substantiate or invalidate the claim that traditional African peoples were innocent of logical and critical thinking” (p. 51-52), as suggested by critics, especially from the colonial past. His concern in sage research was not to claim that sagacity is, by definition, philosophy but rather to look for philosophy within sagacity; that is, to get to their common ground (Odera-Oruka, 1990b). In a way, Odera Oruka aims at looking for philosophy or bits of it in traditional Africa, thereby exposing the value of such thoughts. In the process of doing so, he proposed the sage philosophy to help “...substantiate or disprove the well-known claim that ‘real philosophical thought had no place in traditional Africa...’ and that ‘...the existence of philosophy in Africa is due to the introduction of Western thought to Africa’” (Odera-Oruka, 1990a, p. 29). Of interest to my study and central to the sage philosophy is the place of the individual as the philosophising agent. While Ivan Karp and Dismas Masolo observe that ethnophilosophy emphasises collective thought and looks for meaning in collective practices³, Odera Oruka’s philosophic sagacity argues that sages were unique and interesting individuals whose thoughts and personalities are

³ See Karp, I., & Masolo, D. A. (2000). *African Philosophy as Cultural Inquiry*.

known beyond their own local communities and from whom communities sought ethical and metaphysical guidance and consult on “...issues involving moral and psychological attitudes and judgments” (Odera-Oruka, 1997b, p. 262). This position is in contrast to Mullin’s (1965) uninformed view (as cited in Wiredu) that:

The African’s reasoning methods are not discursive; he knows nothing of the syllogism, he thinks inductively rather than deductively; nor is his thinking analytic: it is intuitive and synthetic... This is a mentality different from the European, and has to be respected as such... (*He has*) a circular manner of thinking, a collecting of impressions... A more important consequence in his thought of the concrete over the abstract (Wiredu, 1987, pp. 32-33).

Odera Oruka sought to invalidate such and other fallacious generalisations, which collapsed African philosophy into folk thinking. He stressed that African philosophy is philosophic sagacity; “...a reflection of a person who is: a sage and a thinker. As a sage the person is versed in the wisdoms and traditions of his people, and very often he is recognised by the people themselves as having this gift” (Odera-Oruka, 1991, p. 51). His efforts were directed at showing that there are philosophic sages capable of syllogistic reasoning in Africa, both in literate and non-literate societies. He characterised such individuals as:

...critical, independent thinkers who guide their thoughts and judgments by the power of reason and inborn insight rather than by the authority of the communal consensus. They are capable of taking a problem or a concept and offering a rigorous philosophical analysis of it, making clear rationally where they accept or reject the established or communal judgment on the matter (Odera Oruka, 1990, p. 16).

In addition, Odera Oruka observes that in traditional Africa, uninfluenced by modernity, there are genuine philosophers (philosophic sages); individuals capable of fundamental reflection on man and their world, and these men and women are endowed with the capacity to subject philosophy of their own communities to criticism and modification. But, one may question the use of the adjective ‘traditional’ in the characterisation of

philosophic sagacity. By implication, to what extent have they (sages) been insulated from the forceful impact of westernisation? I agree, to some extent, with English and Kalumba's (1996) assertion that given the global world in which we live today the presence of a purely traditional African is rather a "myth". However, despite the Western influence, Africa still has persons who are deeply rooted in their culture, *little* affected by Western scholarship, and who are authentic agents of traditional Africa in the modern situation. Odera Oruka elaborates on the point by concurring that "Some of these persons might have been partly influenced by the inevitable moral and technological culture from the West; nevertheless, their own outlook and cultural belonging remain basically that of traditional rural Africa. And except for a handful of them, the majority of them are illiterate or semi-illiterate (Odera Oruka, 1991, p. 51). Odera Oruka further makes a clear distinction between an ordinary sage and a critical thinker. As he succinctly puts it, a sage "...does not necessarily make a philosopher, some sages are simply moralists and the disciplined, diehard faithful to a tradition... others merely historians and good interpreters of the history and customs of their people" (Odera-Oruka, 1990b, p. 177). His description of a philosophic sage includes one who is "...not only wise, but also capable of being rational and critical in understanding or solving the inconsistencies of his or her culture, and coping with foreign encroachments on it. Thus as thinkers, they opt to recommend only those features of belief and wisdom that make the grade of their test." Odera Oruka proceeds to separate philosophic sagacity from culture philosophy as described in the section on ethnophilosophy above by explaining that "Beliefs or truth claims within a culture philosophy are generally treated as absolutes... Philosophic sagacity, however, is often a product of a reflection; re-evaluation of the 'culture philosophy'. The few sages who possess the philosophic inclination make a critical assessment of their underlying beliefs" (Odera-Oruka, 1990b, pp. 178-179). He looks at culture philosophy (ethnophilosophy) as first-order engagement with culture while philosophic sagacity goes beyond this as a second-order activity that critically reflects on or even resists the first-order conformity by being open-minded and rational. The question that remains to be answered is: What are the implications of philosophic sagacity for the broader definition of philosophy in general and for African philosophy in particular?

First, this trend or approach holds that philosophy is *individual*, thereby rejecting the ethnophilosophers' position that African philosophy is a collective thought endeavour. Second, philosophic sagacity claims that literacy is not a precondition for philosophy, and therefore philosophers are found in both the literate and non-literate societies. As Masolo (1994) puts it, while literacy does not constitute a measurement of philosophising, oral tradition alone would be a hindrance to philosophy because "only the interpretation of a point of view about the essence and about the realities of life... falls within the domain of philosophy" (p. 238). The key tenet, for him, is that philosophy is based on some form of tradition sustained by some discursive enquiry, rather than a simple expression of ideas. Third, African philosophy, according to Odera Oruka, is embedded in oral tradition and written traditions. He argues that individual art of discourse is not necessarily a philosophy, just as not any mode of thought is philosophy. A particular mode of thought could still represent a fictional, poetic or literary discourse, rather than a philosophic one. Thus Odera Oruka (1991) is of the conviction that "...not every thinker is a philosopher" (p. 6). He further elaborates that: "In a strict sense, a sage has at least two abilities, insight and ethical inspiration. So, a sage is wise, he has insight, but he employs this for the ethical betterment of his (her) community. A philosopher may be a sage and vice versa. But many philosophers do lack the ethical commitment and inspiration found in the sage" (Odera-Oruka, 1990a, pp. 9-10).

Odera Oruka has been criticised for doing ethnophilosophy and social anthropology both of which utilise oral literature as their central method. For him, philosophic sagacity does not have the objective of a communal consensus on any human concern, problem or question. Instead, it identifies individual thinkers who dialogue on community issues and priorities. In return, their communities appreciate them as having individual wisdom that transcends communally held knowledge and wisdom since, as individuals, the sages offer critical explanations to issues affecting human life. However, one finds a close relationship between the community-held beliefs and

doctrines, which is the central business of ethnophilosophy and philosophic sagacity. The sage philosopher engages the communal thought in his reflections and in making abstract choices. The worldviews of the people; their thought systems are a product of the collectively pooled individual thoughts that perpetuate and manifest themselves among community members as communally held ideas. I will argue that *all* children have the potential of philosophising about their cultural experiences in their individual capacity in community with others. Just as Odera Oruka observed, although he does not refer to children, Africa cannot be exempted from the world of rationality, systemacity and rigorous thinking since there are men and women who can equally dispose such character traits as shown in the sage theory. I will use these grounds to justify an African perspective of Philosophy for Children.

In his criticism of Odera Oruka's philosophic sagacity, Bodunrin (1981) argues that

“It is one thing to show that there are men capable of philosophical dialogue in Africa and another to show that there are African philosophers in a sense of those who have engaged in organised systematic reflections on the thoughts, beliefs and practices of their people” (p.170). For Bodunrin, philosophic sagacity was only a pointer to philosophical ability and not an indicator that there existed philosophers in traditional Africa. He admits that philosophical sagacity effectively indicates the reality of philosophical potential among traditional Africans. Yet, he doubts the existence of a philosophical tradition, since it remains unproven, and is hard to imagine how such a tradition can be preserved without literacy. I disagree with Bodunrin on this issue. Although documented evidence can be a store of one tradition or another, we can also argue that philosophy as a practice can be validated and located in the oral mode without being captured in writing. Bodunrin could have been influenced by the view that up to then African philosophy was not written in the form of long, winding systematic reflections. I find it indefensible to call all reflection and questioning philosophy. Ideas of a philosophic sage would remain beliefs and not philosophy unless they are subjected to rigorous, critical analysis by the sage him/herself.

The pertinent question that remains unanswered is: How does philosophic sagacity help in defining philosophy in Africa today? Conversely, of what epistemic significance is philosophic sagacity to doing philosophy in the 21st century? I argue that Odera Oruka's principle of conversation informs an African perspective of doing philosophy with children. The approach contributes the use of the interview, discussion and dialogue as methods of doing philosophy. In this method, African philosophy is conceived product of both the traditional as well as modern African philosophers. His emphasis on a specific African issue, formulated by an indigenous African thinker(s), or by a thinker(s) versed in African cultural and intellectual life (Odera Oruka 1990) and consequently, the embeddedness of philosophy in both the oral and written traditions of Africa. Hountondji (2003) explains that besides philosophic sagacity being an activity done by individuals, the materials on which the process takes place is grounded first and foremost in the African experience. The merit of the sages is that they want to make their immediate environment (society) the reason of their philosophical discourse in order to offer an examined good life for their communities. Philosophic sagacity can also be seen as having something practical to contribute to real life. Odera Oruka (1997a) reveals that sage philosophy not only embraces rational and critical methodology but also wisdom that is morally committed to the well-being of mankind. He writes that "...the sage cares about knowledge, and he adds to knowledge morality, the moral spirit. He aims at the ethical betterment of the community that he lives in... the sage has...two policies: he has science, the knowledge plus ethical obligation for himself, for the community and for the world" (pp. 253-254). A Philosophy for Children programme will draw some valuable lessons from Odera Oruka's postulation since sagacity is not a "...mere hair-splitting and abstraction but (*rather*) becomes something that has a meaning in real life" (Gutema, 1998, p. 67). Similarly, Presby (1996) finds the value of sage philosophy in that it is "rooted in a location and has connections with the community" (p. 6-7). I will argue that the incorporation of these ethical and practical aspects in Philosophy for Children in Africa will go a long way in assisting philosophy to emerge from its academic exclusivity.

Unlike the Western tradition of analytic philosophy, which is characterised by and suffers from the relevance and utility crisis, philosophic sagacity enters with the contribution of orienting itself culturally and “...trying to raise the questions of the relevance of a knowledge that has always claimed to be universal, rational, critical, and places mankind at the centre of its investigation” (Gutema, 1998, p. 67). In addition, sage philosophy does not accept the traditions by virtue of them having been given to us by the generations before. Rather it inquires whether such a practice is somewhat reasonable. In Chapter 9, I will attempt to demonstrate the place of doing philosophy with children as engaging in the interpretation of culture just as sagacious philosophy would do.

2.7 Nationalist-ideological philosophy

The nationalist-ideological philosophy in Africa is fundamentally the works realised, according to Bodunrin (1991a), from the attempts “to evolve a new...unique political theory based on the traditional *African* socialism and familyhood” (p. 64). The assumption of this trend is that it must be African political philosophy different from capitalist, socialist or communist systems. Philosophers in this tradition hold that traditional political systems remain the point of departure for current political structures. The trend is mainly concerned with defining African philosophy by referring to political manifestos of liberation movements whose ideologies believe should be the focus of philosophy in Africa. Nationalist-ideological philosophy was founded in the struggle for the liberation of the Africans from colonial rule. This category involves philosophic reflections on the authentic African personality and identity in order to recover and revive the humanity of Africans dehumanised by enslavement and colonialism (Birt, 1991). It also aimed at the (re)construction of a characteristically African social and political philosophy from indigenous social values and communalism (ibid). The nationalistic ideological trend of African philosophy is expressed in the works of such African nationalists as Kwame Nkrumah, Sekou Toure, Julius Nyerere, Leopold Sedar

Senghor, Aime Cesaire and Amilcar Cabral. Such social and political philosophers have come forward to address the critical political situation and issues of the moment. Nationalist ideological philosophy can be said to be the response to the existing political and social order.

While identifying with the nationalist-ideological philosophers who wish to advance special consideration of the new sociopolitical order; unique and based on traditional African humanism, Bodunrin dismisses the trend, especially given its affiliation with the African past. He sees elements of ethnophilosophy in the trend. In fact, I agree with Bodunrin's observation that the approach adopted by the above intellectual statesmen is one more of romanticising or seeking to recapture the African past. One would ask, whether given the fast trends in globalisation, modernisation and industrialisation it is possible to recapture the past. How much can Africans rely on tradition, given the increasing urbanisation and cultural heterogeneity? The Africa we live in today is different from traditional ways of life. While making a progressive contribution to the political framework for Africans, this trend can only be employed to define African philosophy if it can be subjected to more critical and rigorous analysis. The question is what are the implications of this perspective to doing philosophy with children in Africa?

The trend, though political in nature, abstracts a unique theory from traditional Africa. Its strength is in the submission that Africa's tradition has something peculiarly valuable to offer the present world. Central and relevant to doing philosophy with children is the trend's recognition of the values of African tradition and narratives forming the content, and the community-centred values coupled with the African democratic model of governance. Hence, I will argue that Philosophy for Children may borrow from this perspective of philosophy the content which is centred on African values, and the community-centred aspect providing the method which is unique to Africa. In addition, the ideological-nationalist philosophy proposes a new kind of

philosopher who is reflective, and is capable comparing and contrasting the philosophical ideals of the contemporary world especially where Western, Eastern and African ideals struggle for dominance. On this view, the African of this trend is supposed to possess the philosophical sophistication of the sage and be adept in juggling the values of traditional Africa with the needs of a modern nation-state (Ikpe, n.d). Hence, the nationalist-ideological philosopher would propose an African perspective of Philosophy for Children, which is not only expected to be well founded on African tradition but is also adequately comfortable with other political ideologies and practices of philosophy elsewhere. The next section examines Odera Oruka's last, but not least, perspective of African Philosophy, that is professional philosophy.

2.8 Professional Philosophy

This trend views African philosophy as the philosophical reflections on and an analysis of African conceptual systems embarked upon by professional philosophers. By virtue of their universalist view of philosophy, professional philosophers hold that philosophy must have a similar meaning in all cultures (Imbo, 1998). In line with the Western philosophers who emphasise "freedom of inquiry, openness to criticism, scepticism and fallibilism and non-veneration of authorities" (Oyeshile, 2006, p. 60), the group accepts that Western scientific and philosophical categories should be used in the study of African thought which, to them, is characterised by religiosity, spiritism and authoritarianism and superstition (Bodunrin, 1985). Hountondji (2003) dismisses the ethnophilosophic tradition by emphasising that:

I cannot deny that there are collective thought systems in Africa. But this is not enough, and this, by the way, is not specific to Africa. Why should Africans content themselves with the description of their collective ways of thinking and present it as philosophy? We have to describe the existing worldviews, and critically appreciate these in terms of their effects on our day-to-day lives. The effects may be positive or negative (p. 11).

In support of his Western-trained professional and contemporary, Bodunrin (1991a) proposes that African philosophy is "...the philosophy done by African philosophers

whether it is in the area of logic, metaphysics, ethics or history of philosophy. It is desirable that the works be set in the African context, but it is not necessary that they be so” (Bodunrin, 1991a, p. 162). The above shows that professional philosophers use their training to determine whether there is or is not an African philosophy. In other words, instead of using their training in philosophy to philosophise about the African condition they engage in the Western modes of doing philosophy to discredit African ways of philosophising. In effect, they are convinced that the whole of philosophy could be defined using the criteria of rigour, systematicity and criticism. For them, there is a dividing line between those who use analysis and those who have attempted other methods. Those outside the realm of the former are accused of practising non-philosophy — the binary in which African philosophy belongs. But Makinde (1988) disputes this view. He observes that:

We cannot use the Western analytic philosophy which is only one of many philosophical traditions in the West to dismiss their kinds of philosophy as non-existent” (*and conversely*), “...we cannot use the analytic rigour as the telescope and yardstick through which to look for and by which we look for and by which we measure the existence of African, Oriental, or any non-western philosophy” (p. 40).

For the professional philosophers, African philosophy today is predominantly a philosophical issue dealing with the central theme of, “What is philosophy?” and the corollary, “What is African philosophy?” (Emagalit, n.d). To this end, Odera Oruka identifies some drawbacks of professional philosophy, one of which is that it “...lacks personal subject matter, a prolonged history of debates and literature to preserve and expand itself as well as a limited degree of self-criticism” (Odera-Oruka, 1990b, p. 42). Professional African philosophy has no content or subject matter save the continual quest to know what African philosophy is.

Hountondji and Bodunrin, as the prominent protagonists of professional philosophy, upon realising that some scholars defined African philosophy as the opposite of Western philosophy, formulated an African philosophy that narrowly identifies with

mainstream Western and Eastern forms of philosophical productions. Their project was to give substance to an African philosophy within the framework of Western philosophic tradition. They proposed that philosophy and philosophical concepts are the same everywhere regardless of place and culture and for a philosophy to be universal it should fit in the Western criteria of philosophy as shown above thereby awarding a universal value to Western philosophy. Based on this assertion, Hountondji proposes that African philosophy needs to be premised on universality born by Western philosophy. Hence, he concludes that African philosophy must have “...the same universal aims and those of any other philosophy in the world” (Hountondji, 1983a, p. 66), since, for him, what is at issue in providing the meaning of a philosophy that can be said to be uniquely African is “the universality of the word ‘philosophy’ throughout its possible geographical applications” (p. 56). One is bound to conclude that Hountondji’s position is a reflection of his Western background and training. In complementing his Ghanaian peer philosopher Appiah (1997), Hountondji holds the view that despite philosophical themes varying from philosopher to philosopher and culture to culture (Hountondji, 1983), there is one method of philosophical inquiry which all must uphold. To that end, he confirms that “the African peoples, who take over the theoretical heritage of Western philosophy, assimilating and transcending it, are producing authentic African philosophy” (p. 67). Similarly, Bodunrin (1991a), not to be outdone, asserts that the definition of a philosophical thought “must have a universal relevance to all men” (p. 137). Besides, Bodunrin identifies the history of Western philosophical ideas with the history of world philosophy, and it alone defines what is of “universal relevance”. Thus he finds a hostile and aggressive relationship between the particularity of African culture and the universality of Western culture. He warns us that “our culture may be dear to us but truth must be dearer” (p. 176). However, while Hountondji and his fellow critics of other methods of doing philosophy are able to raise the above reasons why African philosophy is only particular to Africa and not universal, they do not provide reasons for the universality of other philosophies especially European or Anglo-American philosophy.

The professional philosophy school makes clear distinctions between philosophical and non-philosophical discourses by employing Western-originated criteria determined by Western academia. For instance, this group of thinkers declines to accept the African worldviews as philosophy for their lack of rationality and coherence. Basing on their case that philosophy must be rigorous and systematic and that as a discipline it is reflective, rational and critical, they therefore deny that philosophy is simply represented by myths, legends or folklore. If defined in the context of the process view discussed in Chapter 1 they are right to argue that philosophy works over and elaborates concepts extracted from the ore of myth and magic, or at least attempts to do so. But, I question the singling out of system, rigour and conceptual analysis as *the methods* of doing authentic philosophy while dismissing traditional African thoughts as non-philosophical. I argue that the professional philosopher's demand for coherence, rigorous interrogation is as good as prejudging African philosophy. If advocates of the analytic approach are right, then the advocates may as well discard the philosophies of existentialism, of Cicero, Emerson, Seneca and other Western thinkers (Birt, 1991).

The professional philosopher's subscription to African philosophy has its own drawbacks. Seen exclusively, it seems to imply that philosophic thought only commenced in Africa after the emergence of such philosophers and, as such, the African philosophical mind was a blank slate before the "return" of this group of Africans from the West where they studied "the philosophy" and methods of engaging in it. While it is admissible that there is the technical aspect of philosophy as an academic discipline, it may also be vital to mention that traditional Africans also had their unique techniques of doing philosophy embedded within their tradition as will be demonstrated later in this study. I concur with Kaphagawani (1998)'s observation that the trend has no history save for criticising ethnophilosophy, hence it lacks a literature of its own. Consequently, professional African philosophy can only progress by switching from protests against ethnophilosophy to a study of concepts and issues related to philosophy. I now turn to the value and relevance of the professional philosophy trend to Philosophy for Children in African.

I find the critical, rational and systematic tradition of doing philosophy as evinced by professional philosophers contributing immensely to the emergence of an African perspective of doing philosophy with children in Africa. By developing a rational and critical approach we can appraise what we have inherited from the past generations. Through this approach we render our philosophies more useful especially in reconstructing and transforming our cultures to the benefit of contemporary societies. Hence Wiredu(1980) has concluded that:

It is a function, indeed a duty of philosophy in any society to examine the intellectual foundations of its culture. For any such examination to be of any real use it should take the form of reasoned criticism and, where possible, reconstruction. No other way to philosophical progress is known than through criticism and adaptation. Those who seem to think that the criticism of African traditional philosophy by an African is something akin to cultural betrayal are actually more conservative than those among our elders who are real thinkers as distinct from mere repositories of traditional ideas (p. 21).

In addition, Bodunrin's (1991a) attachment to Aristotle's proposition that "philosophy begins in wonder" (p. 3), and is a "...conscious creation which does not occur until one begins to reflect on one's beliefs" (p. 10), is evidence that professional philosophy accepts that in doing philosophy anywhere, people start with and from what they hold to be true before reflecting on it. Maurier (1984) adds that philosophy must be rigorous and systematic and claims that "...everyone would agree that philosophy as a discipline is reflective, rational and systematic" (p. 26) and maintains that philosophy be regarded as a discipline guided by rigour and systemacity. African professional philosophy is also about criticism of the unthinking acceptance of the transfer of pedagogical and research models and products from the Europe as the centre of educational activity. Hence, to Philosophy for Children professional philosophy contributes the criteria of conscious, creative discursiveness, and critical self-reflection. If Philosophy for Children in Africa accepts the professional philosopher's conception of philosophy as a systematic, rigorous, universal, and rational discipline, then these features must be evident in

children's enterprise of philosophising in the classroom. Odera Oruka (1991) also adds reason to the list of criteria for doing philosophy the professional way as he puts forward that "reason is a universal human trait" (p.16). Hence, from the professional philosophy school, the African perspective of Philosophy for Children borrows the attributes of reasonableness, criticism, objectivity, coherence, rigour and systemacity as necessary conditions for participants to engage in the activity of philosophising.

Formal philosophy as proposed by professional philosophers is typified by universal rationality, which is revealed in critical analysis, rigorous and abstract reasoning and argumentation. It thus shuns the dogmatism and unfounded authoritarianism that characterises ethnophilosophy and philosophic sagacity. Professional philosophy suggests a reinterpretation and reconstruction of worldviews and traditional ideas as a root of African contemporary analytic philosophy. This is the essence of philosophy universalists are looking for in Africa in order to introduce some rigour. It is a truism that contemporary African philosophy has to originate from somewhere from a particular place and ethnophilosophy is the legitimate candidate for such characterisation. However, for such philosophy to pass the test, contemporary African professional philosophy there is a need to inject some rigour. Wiredu (1980) argues that the term "African philosophy" should only be used to describe the work of African professional philosophers, who are researching the traditional background of their philosophical thought. Hence, we can infer that an African perspective of Philosophy for Children might take a cue from the professional philosophy school.

In the context of the professional philosophy trend, Philosophy for Children in Africa becomes a process, an activity and not a worldview, in which individuals use the criteria discussed above to philosophise. As will be explored in Part 3 of this study, the Western analytic tradition of philosophy, which professional philosophers purport to practise is based on a methodology that involves rigour. It also acknowledges the writing tradition for philosophic exchanges and discussions facilitated by books and communities of

others in which individuals are active participants in the process of knowing. With regards subject matter, the professional philosophy again seems to construe philosophy as an inquiry into abstract and conceptual questions and problems that are also universal to all human beings and not relative to a group or culture. Hence, a Philosophy for Children in Africa, for professional philosophy, would imply the exploration and examination of universal concepts rather than engage with concepts that are culture-specific. If Philosophy for Children in Africa is to pursue the views of professional philosophers such as Bodunrin then it would involve “...doing African philosophy only because *(they)* are Africans or are... in Africa, and are interested in a philosophical problem (however universal) from an African point of view” (Bodunrin, 1991b, p. 169).

2.9 Artistic / Literary Philosophy

Odera Oruka argues that this trend refers to the narrative element in African philosophy derived from the literary works of such novelists as Wole Soyinka, Ngugi wa Thiongo and Chinua Achebe (Odera Oruka 1998) who reflected on philosophical issues through essays and fictional work. However, it is notable that Odera Oruka himself did not explicate the philosophical aspects of such works. It is probable that he postulated these literary works as qualitatively reflective in order to be defined as philosophy. It would not be surprising to note that even the said authors never thought they were producing philosophical texts of any kind. Hence I find this trend contributing little to a conception of an African perspective of Philosophy for Children.

2.10 Hermeneutic Philosophy

This trend views African philosophy as contained in the analysis of African languages in a bid to secure philosophical content. Barry Hallen, Theophilus Okere, Tsenay Serequeberhan and Kwame Gyekye are among philosophers banded together in this category. In the hermeneutical approach, the starting point of philosophy is lived experience, and the lived experience of most Africans rotates around a struggle to cope with the pervasive effects of the cultural and economic imperialism of Europe. Hence the principal objective of African philosophy for hermeneuticists is how to attain emancipation from the injuries imposed by European hegemony. Traditional beliefs and

oral discourse are not valuable in themselves, but only relative to the contribution they make to this end. Philosophy in this sense is not so much *what* is said but rather *how* it is interpreted. To this end hermeneutics in African philosophy engages the concepts of deconstruction and reconstruction in an effort to rid the African mindset of the debilitating effects of oppression and domination by colonialists. In Okere's *African Philosophy: A Historico-Hermeneutical Investigation of the Conditions of its Possibility* (1983) an attempt at understanding the relationship between philosophy and culture is at the heart of the hermeneutic perspective. The question then is: Of what value is the hermeneutic trend in our understanding of an African perspective of Philosophy for Children? I will argue that the programme can only be authentically African if children start with concepts emanating from the African background as will be shown in Chapter 9. A critique of these positions will be made in detail in Part 3.

2.11 Summary and Critique

I find the philosophical question what philosophy is asked in Chapter 1 resurfacing as we battle to address the unanswered question of the identity of an African philosophy. I share Hountondji's (1983) understanding of philosophy, particularly that philosophy can either be taken in the popular sense or the theoretical. In the popular sense, he argues, philosophy is "any kind of wisdom, individual or collective, any set of principles presenting some degree of coherence and intended to govern the daily practice of an individual or a people" (p.47). The stricter, more theoretical sense sees philosophy as "...a specific theoretical discipline with its own exigencies and methodological rule" (ibid). The two definitions can be used to position African philosophy as long as one does not confuse them. It is worth noting, however, that African and Western philosophers undeniably concur that the traditional belief system of the African people is a fundamental part of African philosophy (Oyeshile, 2008). The major task of African philosophers is to defend the methodology that they engage to carry out African philosophy.

In the history of African philosophy, or what others may want to call the history of the debate on African philosophy, as noted in the preceding sections in this chapter, different scholars have posited diverse views on the nature and definition of African philosophy. For one group, African Philosophy is the philosophical thought of traditional Africans to be filtered from their various worldviews, beliefs, myths and proverbs. In this view, it is philosophy indigenous to Africans, unadulterated by exotic ideas. If one is to gain a deep understanding of such philosophy, then one needs to search into the roots of the traditions of the African people without the interfering influences of the westernised folks. The described category represents the worldview conception of philosophy. For another group, African philosophy is the philosophical reflection on, and analysis of, African conceptual schemes and social realities. The fundamental idea entertained by the latter group is that African thought, like any other traditional thought, is rich with issues of great philosophical interest that are worth investigating. Accordingly, African philosophy is philosophy done by trained African philosophers with the collaboration of traditional thinkers with good knowledge of traditional beliefs, values and conceptual systems. The third group is convinced that wherever the existence of a community of rational beings is conceded or acknowledged, philosophical thought cannot be denied. This group holds that traditional African societies must have a share of philosophers and philosophical reflections and such reflection can challenge the form of beliefs and values, concerning life and its meaning.

My venture into the African philosophy debate has opened up some topical issues that centre on the question of definition of an African philosophy. From the very diverse body of published work, one can observe that the point of disagreement regarding the nature of African philosophy may be reduced and expressed summarily in the form of two broad questions. First, is philosophy the consequence of a collective, universal human reason or is every philosophy in some considerable way a manifestation of the culture which produces it? Second, though closely related to the first, are logic, rationality and argumentation inherent and even obligatory features of anything which claims to be philosophy, or are they just peculiar to Western philosophy and therefore

not normative to African philosophy? Must there be something uniquely African in method or content? Similarly, can an African philosophy continue to possess its authenticity with(out) the inclusion of rationality, argumentation and analysis in its definition?

Makinde has proposed that a great deal of what is referred to as African Philosophy is rooted in African cultural beliefs, some which may not be worth courting (Makinde, 1988). I agree that it is not all that tradition has offered us that the contemporary world needs to appropriate to serve the current conditions. The professional philosopher's proposition to engage rigour, analysis, coherence and systemacity is then invited in the enterprise of separating the relevant from the irrelevant. While some of these beliefs may be outmoded in the 21st century, others may be so fundamental to the African heritage that they require preservation, revision and improvement. There are cultural beliefs that are so controversial that they need to be examined more closely by exposing them to critical, rigorous and systematic analysis to make them relevant to the existential circumstances of the modern era. The cultural beliefs that are at a tangent with the current beliefs deserve our total rejection while those congruent to what we believe today require some further analyses and some possible refinements or conceptual modifications to make them sustainable. African philosophy, in this view, becomes the conceptual interpretation and analysis of the African experience by responding to the fundamental questions and problems created by that experience as well as proposing new or alternative ways of thinking and acting. I submit to Ruch and Anyanwu's thesis that the meaning of African philosophy is an investigation into African wisdom, the African worldview, the African existential identity of African ideologies (Ruch & Anyanwu, 1981). I will make a case in Part 3 that the cultural beliefs traditional to Africa — the worldviews, can become the raw materials; the stimulus for philosophical discussions with children in Africa.

The ethnophilosophy perspective discussed above views philosophy as being concerned with the way Africans, past and present, make sense of their world. This does not exclude those who have immigrated to Africa and have made Africa their home. I posit that an authentic definition of philosophy in Africa should include engaging the traditional beliefs and worldviews of the traditional Africans as well as their present life-world, priorities and challenges through critical, systematic and comprehensive analysis. I explored the particularist (culturalist)/universalist binary in Chapter 1. Like any other human endeavour, philosophy must start and take place in a particular context and time. Besides, it emerges from a particular tradition of thought, distinct from other traditions. Philosophers from different traditions deal with issues and challenges in unique ways and provide answers to the different social and cultural circumstances. African philosophy starts from individuals through to professionals who utilise critical and creative thinking skills to interrogate the African experience. I visualise the integration of sage philosophy and professional philosophy in philosophising about the African situation, past and present. Scholarship is fast-interested not only in knowledge of our past history and traditions, but in how that past can be sorted through in the face of the changing modern times.

I propose that philosophers in Africa and on African affairs should not merely be concerned with the illumination and the preservation of desirable thoughts and practices of traditional African societies. Instead, they should also be concerned with how such principles and practices are to be blended with those from other societies outside the continent be it west, east or north. Thus, philosophers, including philosophers of education, need to acquaint themselves with philosophical traditions from other societies. I will argue in the later part of this study that an African perspective of philosophy starts doing philosophy with children beginning with the African experience. I present a case against an African philosophy that relies on the academic/professional approach alone for this has not proven its worth in practical terms save for availing itself in promoting elitist ivory-tower philosophers unenthusiastic to engage in human affairs arising from contemporary African problems.

The question I then ask is: Should an African perspective of Philosophy for Children be based on the principles of the ethnophilosophical approach, philosophic sagacity, nationalist-ideological or professional philosophy views? An African perspective of Philosophy for Children is an attempted reconciliation but unstable blend that invites a vast number of conflicts: past/future, universalist/culturalist, African thought/philosophy to name only a few. Despite the definitions given by different philosophers on African affairs, the African philosophy that I will argue for in my pursuit of the African perspective of Philosophy for Children is one that calls for what Homi Bhabha has referred to as “the emergence of the interstices in the hybrid forms of postcolonial cultures.” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 2). In Chapter 9, I shall make a case for contemporary Philosophy for Children in Africa to probe into the philosophical foundations of traditional thoughts and practices. Nonetheless, all must prevail with a view to throw light on the contemporary African problems since more than anywhere else, contemporary Africa requires the promotion of a philosophical concern relevant to the conditions of life in Africa (Gbadegesin, 1991).

Furthermore, another important question relevant to this study is: Is it desirable that a tradition of African philosophy should be built around borrowing and appropriation? A tradition of a people’s philosophy may be built around a unique kind of approach or around a cluster of issues and once appropriated, a tradition maintains its distinctiveness. In the same vein, Wiredu (1987) observes that “for a set of ideas to be a genuine possession of a people, they need only to appropriate them, make use of them, develop them and, if the spirit so moves them, thrive on them” (p. 7). In addition, Sogolo (1993) argues that there are certain dimensions of African ways of life that are unique and these cannot be accurately interpreted and understood using Western techniques of philosophy rooted in Western tradition. Hence, in this instance Sogolo proposes that philosophical methodologies are culturally relative. I situate the work of a philosopher in a given tradition if it is either produced within the context of that tradition or taken up and used in it. Even Appiah (1992) encourages philosophers in and of Africa to assertively claim a justifiable place for their probably different views in the

global academic trading floor. I explore the notion of philosophy with children in the African perspective using the definitions of African Philosophy discussed above.

I will argue that doing African philosophy is foremost a philosophic activity focusing on issues of African realities, whether contemporary or traditional. It will involve focusing on African conceptual systems, dealing with problems and issues African in nature, based on contemporary African experience, and comparing as well as analysing African realities vis-a-vis other global perspectives. But, to seek to revive and reinstate in totality traditional African philosophy might be tantamount to nostalgia and over-glorification because that philosophy may not necessarily suffice or be helpful or relevant to Africa's conditions in the 21st century. It is also vital to observe that encroaching modernisation demands novel techniques of research and analysis which must be expanded due to the complex nature of the globalised Africa. Since from a professional philosopher's point of view African philosophy is in the making and therefore developing, it should come up with philosophical options that are in some respects different from those of competing cultures originating from outside Africa. However, it is my conviction that there is no *a priori* objection to the use of elements of the philosophical orientations of one culture for purpose related to another. According to this understanding, African philosophy should be open to begin from its diverse traditions and to borrow from others. Doing philosophy in the African view arguably involves attending to the problems, which arise in the context of the African experience and probing other problems from the African perspective. The relevance of traditional African thought in the contemporary era cannot be denied and philosophising cannot be what it is if it is about abstractions that do make meaning to the lives of those involved in it. Hountondji's (1983b) submission that "...our African philosophy is yet to come... is before us, not behind us and must be created today by decisive action" (Hountondji, 1983b, p. 53) will inform my thesis on hybridisation for a Philosophy for Children in Africa. If philosophy as an intellectual activity is universal, it is available to all peoples of the globe and so philosophy of some kind involves the thoughts and actions of every people. Nevertheless, I do not embrace the wholesale use of the African thought

systems of thoughts and practices as dogmas to be transmitted in the name of African philosophy.

Traditional African philosophical thoughts can be fertile ground from which philosophising with children can grow. In this regard, African philosophy is an effort by philosophers to make the folklores, myths, soothsayings, religion, education and other aspects of the African culture relevant to the conditions in Africa (Oyeshile, 2008). I argue that this should, however, not be through narrow and rigid attachment to the values used in evaluating the African culture. Rather it should take the form of an objective, creative and critical scrutiny and logical procedures, which are not necessarily Western-defined but universally acceptable (ibid). On the basis of this definition of African philosophy, if children in Africa are to engage in the enterprise of philosophy, then the starting point is in the cultural heritage of Africa. Thus, an African philosophy is one that aims to generate and sustain philosophical discussions with African themes.

Besides, it is not a novel idea that ways of doing philosophy from an African perspective can also influence the ways philosophy is done in the Western world. This observation is directed against many commentators⁴ on the globalisation of culture who perceive this process of knowledge flow as unidirectional, from the developing world to the less developed. Of course, the traditional African ways of doing philosophy, by and large, have not demonstrated rigorous scrutiny and assessment but instead tended merely to assume coherence of thought and truth. As Amato (1997) writes:

It is not and has never been through the use of a particular method either in the West or anywhere else that “philosophy” has earned whatever right it may claim to speak for and to humanity. It is rather philosophy’s connection to *central*

⁴ A detailed analysis of the concept of globalisation follows in Part 3 of the study.

human concerns that legitimises any such claims, and in each case this connection takes the form of a set of modalities, methods, or genres of discourse (pp.73-74).

From a methodological definition, philosophy being a rigorous, self-critical intellectual discipline, it is imperative to describe philosophy comparatively as a newcomer to present-day Africa. However, the last forty years have seen professional philosophers in Africa subjecting traditional conceptions to philosophical analysis and examination. However, this demands that these worldviews, at the same time, need to be subjected to critical interrogation and self-reflection. In this study, I join scholars and philosophers in confronting the greatest challenge of reconciling the historical disjunction between the African cultural heritage and the contemporary experience. In the chapters that follow, especially in Part 3, I will attempt to elaborate on Bodunrin's (1992) submission that:

In Africa more than in many other parts of the modern world, traditional culture and beliefs still exercise a great influence on the thinking and actions of man. At a time when many people in the West believe that philosophy has become impoverished and needs redirection, a philosophy study of traditional societies may be the answer (p. 169).

If an African Philosophy is to live up to its name, the traditional African past should be an ongoing part of the dialogue, both spoken and documented, in line with other modern methods of engaging in philosophy. I admit that there is no singular cultural beliefs, customs and values that provides a model for all of Africa's cultures but I am convinced that there are common cultural priorities of Africanness, for instance, the value of communal welfare that need to be re-appropriated for use in the contemporary world. African philosophers, including African philosophers of education, need to achieve a synthesis of the philosophical insights of their ancestors with whatever they can extract of philosophical worth from the intellectual resources of the modern world. They need to reflect on their modes of communication and traditions in a bid to exploit their philosophical implications. Thus, the case for Philosophy for Children in Africa that I examine explores the possibilities of the hybridisation of the African ways of doing philosophy with children with the Western model.

Chapter 3: Conceptions of Childhood and Child Development

3.1 Introduction

Philosophers have given attention to the vulnerability of children and their need for protection and control; their duty to love and honour their parents, obligations of parents to care and shape their children according to some predetermined patterns. However, they have given less written attention to the ontological and metaphysical status of children. While Plato, Aristotle, Rousseau, Kant and Locke have been recognised for their contributions to our understanding of children in the said respects, postmodern philosophers have been “content to accept without challenge whatever notions of children...” (Scarre, 1989, p. ix), although “...the future of any society is determined by the quality of its children...” (Boakye-Boateng, 2010, p. 104). We presume to know much about children, whether because we have all been children, or because we have children around us and maybe because we have spent so much of our time taking care of children, or studying and teaching them. As a result, we have taken ourselves to be the yardstick of what we pronounce about childhood and we explain children from ourselves, that is, from what we have been, or from what we imagine we have been. But does this imply that we are fully aware of what it is to be a child?

The notion of child cannot be discussed outside the dimensions of childhood as a social phenomenon. The central premise here is that “child” is not a natural or universal category, that is, predetermined by biology, nor is it something with a fixed meaning. On the contrary, childhood is historically, culturally and socially variable. It is a truism that “child” and childhood are best understood within a cultural context and to attempt to universalise the concept child is a misrepresentation of the world of children. In this chapter, I contend that children

and the notion of “child” have been regarded in very different ways in different historical epochs, in different cultures and in different social groups. In addition, I observe that the meanings of childhood and child are not rigid and therefore are subject to a constant process of struggle and negotiation in public discussions, including the media, in the academy and in social policy; and in interpersonal relationships, among peers and family members. In the case under investigation, I will start by exploring the western conception of childhood before examining the notion of child in the traditional African context, in order to provide a comparison of the two traditions. This is premised on the grounds that the Lipmanian paradigm of Philosophy for Children has a western origin and hence is focused on the western philosophy of childhood while the African perspective of it that I am proposing is directed at the *African* child of the 21st century who is neither purely traditional African nor purely western, given the effects of colonisation and globalisation. It is inaccurate to argue that all African societies have the same conception of “child”, although there are some dominant themes that appear to permeate their general understanding of it. The same can be said of western societies. I recognise the extraordinary cultural diversity of Africa, but at the same time I am aware that it is not impossible to extricate some common strands of thinking that typify the world of the African child. Given that the thrust of my thesis concerns children doing philosophy in an African context, I wish to focus this chapter on the following central topical issues:

- 1) What is the western conception of childhood and notion of child?
- 2) What is the concept of “child” in traditional African contexts, and how does it differ from other conceptions in history over time?
- 3) What is the nature of the adult-child relationship insofar as ethical, metaphysical and epistemological considerations are concerned?

I wish to draw significant links between “the new discourses of childhood” (James, Jenks, & Prout, 1998, p. 207) that understands the child as “being” and the traditional African notion of child. This chapter will examine childhood within the context of the cycle of life, the family and the life and the knowledge of children; and childhood as a psychological concept that refers to the early experiences influencing human character and behaviour and as a social construction, a set of ideas about children and their ways. As a philosophical inquiry, my exploration into the notion of childhood may be thought of as belonging to a philosophy of persons which Kennedy (2000) defines as “...an inquiry into what adults know about children and the experience of adulthood” (p. 517).

I recognise that childhood is about generational relationships and that children develop largely through their relationships with adults; that they *become adults* and their status as children is defined, in part, by reference to chiefly adult- defined cultural expectations of maturity and immaturity (Woodhead, 2009) . But, for us to understand the notion of the child, I raise some metaphysical questions: What constitutes “child”? Are there any differences ontological and metaphysical, between adults and children? To what extent is the notion of childhood and therefore “child” a cultural construct? Are there similarities and differences between the children’s and adults’ conceptions of the world? I also ask epistemological questions. How do traditional adult Africans perceive children’s knowledge? To what extent do adults contribute to the knowledge of young entrants to the human world? Questions of ethical standing will also be examined in this context. Can children separate right from wrong on their own without interference or intervention?

While it may be difficult to reach a commonly acknowledged explanation of the phenomenon of childhood, different conceptions and pathways seem to point to the way in which childhood as *beginning* is valued. “Beginning” implies absence of experience, the need for help, deprivation of something of highest value, or the initial part of a circumscribed whole. Does this suggest childhood and

consequently children in any context in need of experience, adult assistance and protection, and that therefore children are not yet ready? What I see in this approach is the whole idea of lack, absence and incompleteness. This chapter, however, will not engage with the detailed analysis of the conceptual history of “childhood” since doing this is like “a process taking flight, and having been let loose... it reaches unexpected places... (*and thereby acquires*) unexpected meanings and becomes the subject of controversy” (Cox, 1996, p. 1). Of academic interest in this study is the status of children in theory and research, considering its ontological and epistemological imperatives, which of course are linked to the sociocultural understandings of children’s nature, needs and role in society. Is the notion of “the African child” located in the “discourses of the innocent child, the irrational child and the sinful child” (Woodhead, 2009, p. 17), or is it positioned in the new discourses of a developing, right-bearing child as expressed in the UN Convention on the Rights of a Child?

3.2 Western conceptions of Childhood and Child Development

The concept of childhood innocence is most the commonly censured of a collection of ideas associated with the western construction of childhood (Beane, 1983). Aries’s (1962) seminal work *Centuries of Childhood* has been significant not only in exploring the historical images of childhood, especially in the western world, but also in adding the contestations inherent in the idea that childhood is a natural phenomenon (UN, 2009). But Archard (2001) clarifies this by drawing the differences between having a conception and a concept of childhood. For him, having a concept of childhood involves recognising that children are different from adults while the notion of conception implies the specific view of the characteristics that make adults different from adults. But, as Twum-Danso (1992) affirms, in the modern western society the age of eighteen is the cut-off point for childhood as reflected in the Convention on the rights of the Child(CRC). De Waal explains the roots of this western definition by retorting that: “...the idea of a single (gender neutral) age of legal maturity reflects the western juridical tradition and concepts of citizenship built around the universal franchise and eligibility for

conscription into the army”(Morgan, 1996, p. 14). Hence, in the western world the period from birth to eighteen is a special and precarious stage of a person’s life in which care and protection are highly esteemed in order to achieve a complete and responsible adulthood. However, Andrew Stables’s (2008) *Childhood and the Philosophy of Education* has developed an argument against what he refers to as a radical departure from the Aristotelian view of the child as not yet fully human. For him, ‘Child’ generally involves three separate ideas. *Child 1* refers to the child of the parents and ancestors, and is not age-linked: we are all *Child 1*. *Child 2* is the vulnerable little one, demanding the care of adults and deserving some special ways of care. Taking after Rousseau and Romanticism this category characterises the dominant view of child in western societies. *Child 3* is the child as a novice to be apprenticed by the adult expert.

Stables’s argument challenges the Aristotelian conception of the *child* as qualitatively different from the adult by asserting that “... we are all, child and adult alike, semiotic engagers and meaning makers” (Chung, 2002, p. 96). To this end, his presentation of the idea of living as ‘semiotic engagement’ is the foundation for his thesis of a ‘fully semiotic view of childhood’. Accordingly, with the child as an agent in his/her own right, Stables makes a case for the need to respect the integrity of the child’s world. But despite his well thought-out case, children and childhood have turned out to be the focus of immense interventions (Mayall, 2000). In most European countries, for example, childhood has been immensely scholarised with children compelled to attend formal schooling from preschool to university thereby increasing periods of the acquisition of cultural capital and in the process lengthening childhood. Given such characterisation of child and the conception of childhood in the west, the question then is what is there “... to motivate many 11 to 14 year olds who are no longer in the state of dependence and for whom the search for chosen credentials is not yet relevant?”(Chung, 2002, p. 138).

In addition to the above conceptions of childhood in the west, David Kennedy, in *Reconstructing Childhood* (1984), proposes some characteristic features of the child’s actual position in the social world. First he identifies the child as a marginalised subject

(p. 30) and children have been subjected to forms of marginalisation and treated as *cultural outsiders*. Second he looks at children as property. This view is founded on “the fundamental attitude of unmitigated possession, such that the child is not perceived to have any humanity apart from the projected humanity which the adult accords it” (p. 30). Third the child is economically disenfranchised with no right to property save for that provided by the parents or guardians. Hence in the west, “Children have no economic means in our society apart from episodic menial tasks for extremely low pay” (Shaull, 1984, p. 30). Further he identifies a fourth view of the child as an ontological other which resembles the Aristotelian conception of the child lacking the capacity of choice and moral ability. Kennedy adds the western view of child as epistemically⁵ incomplete; one who is an “irrational other” (p. 31). How then does the western conception of childhood compare and contrast with the African perspective of the same? A brief exploration of this question will be done in the summary section of this chapter.

3.3. African Conceptions of the ‘Child’ and Childhood

The analysis I will conduct below will concern childrearing practices from distinct cultural backgrounds in Africa to make inferences to the concept of childhood in Africa (Boakye-Boateng, 2010). My personal experiences of the Shona culture, coupled with the socialisation processes I was availed to as a child through to my transition into adulthood, will also act as a basis for some of the observations made and considered here. In addressing the traditional African perception of a child, I am, of course, providing a theoretical description: drawing the explanatory abstract data from my cultural background experiences among the Shona people of Zimbabwe, as well as from other African ethnic groups, as far as they are portrayed in the literature. A comparative analysis of traditional African child and childhood and the modern child will be presented below. It is important at this

⁵ Miranda Fricker discusses the notion of “epistemic injustice” (Lansdown, 2001), which will be critiqued in the last section of this chapter. Besides, Didier Kaphagawani’s notion of “epistemological authoritarianism” (Kaphagawani, 1988), as discussed in this study, will further position the concept of the epistemically incomplete child. The concept of childhood and philosophy is further discussed in Chapter 5 of this study as argued by western philosophers in the history of educational ideas.

stage to reveal that essentially, “African cultures, metaphysics, attitudes and customs are at least very similar, if not entirely the same” (Tangwa 2000, p. 41). Consequently, for the purposes of my study, generalisations may be held to have certain plausibility.

Children, it is commonly assumed, are those subjects who are yet to reach biological and social maturity. They are simply younger than adults and are yet to develop those competencies adults possess. The less-than-adult status implies that childhood is a stage in human development when children are to be developed, stretched and educated into their future adult roles. This could take the form of schooling as well as socialisation or also through the family and wider social and civic life. The developmental perspective of childhood is rooted in the view that children are in a position of immaturity represented by being irrational, incompetent, and asocial and acultural, passive and dependent. Children are seen as human *becomings* rather than human beings, who through the process of socialisation are to be shaped into fully human adult beings (James et al., 1998). This view is similar to the Aristotelian philosophy of childhood, with emphasis on the mature adult being a final cause – the end or purpose – of everything that comes earlier in human development from embryo to the infant and the child (Matthews, 2006). In this sense, a child is only understood accurately by making reference to what children should naturally become. By considering children as being incompetent and incomplete, this perspective regards them as “adults in the making rather than children in the state of being” (Brannen & O'Brien, 1995, p. 70). Consequently, it is in this context that adults are perceived to be translators and interpreters of children's lives and therefore adults are right and children are wrong. Given this characterisation of “child”, how then does it resonate with the notion of doing philosophy with children? Does such a perspective of child allow the young to criticise, argue and challenge the beliefs and doctrines that characterise the status quo in African communities? These are issues to be discussed in Part 3 of this research.

Traditional African thought and practices are rooted on the principle of communalism (Fayemi, 2009) where community implies a social-political set-up made up of persons or who are linked together by interpersonal bonds; with communal values which define and guide their social relations. Like in other social settings, the family in traditional Africa is the most basic unit (Muyila, 2006) and it exhibits the strongest sense of solidarity which extends beyond the nuclear members of the husband, wife and children to the larger group, mainly linked by blood. It is in the context of a web of kinship and relatedness that the child's welfare is founded in the community of relationships as will be discussed in Chapter 9. In fact, every child is everybody's child (Hansungule, 2005). Characterised by a communalistic philosophy, traditional African communities place the child in close contact with a larger group and socialise the young into the group and the group in turn has the responsibility towards the child. The child responds by offering a duty towards not only the immediate family members but also the larger community. Thus, a reciprocal relationship prevails. The reciprocity principle entailed values "sharing resources, burden, and social responsibility, mutual aid, caring for others, interdependence, solidarity, reciprocal obligation, social harmony and mutual trust" (Oyeshile, 2006, p. 104). The community demands require that the child abandons the individual good to submit to the collective interests. Opposed to the Western view that attaches great importance to individual interest, autonomy, universality, natural rights and neutrality (Daly, 1994), the African communalistic worldview stresses the common good, social practices and traditions, character, solidarity and social responsibility. The virtues above will be examined in detail as I examine the notion of *community* in the context of an African perspective of Philosophy for Children in Africa. Given the above characterisation of the traditional African community, the question then is how do traditional Africans define "child"?

The traditional Africans view is that the community is more important than the individual and it takes precedence over the individual. In addition to the significant role the community plays in prescribing norms to the individual who is expected to imbibe and retain them as definitive of him/her, individuals are not given the

option to question but simply receive them to the best of their abilities if they are to become fully recognised “persons” in their respective communities. The traditional paternalistic conception of childhood treats the child as a blank slate in need of protection and training for adulthood, just like conceptions of childhood in other societies. However, Menkiti (1984), contrasting Western and African conception of personhood, comments:

As far as Africans are concerned, personhood is something at which individuals could fail, at which they could be incompetent or ineffective, better or worse. Hence, the African emphasised the rituals of incorporation and the overarching necessity of learning the social rules by which the community lives, so that what was initially biologically given can come to attain social selfhood, i.e. become a person with all the inbuilt excellencies implied by the term (p. 173).

In addition, traditional Africans consider the child delicate, one who needs extra attention and protection, and the birth of a new child is characterised by community welcome, community invests in the child, and/or is named after a departed family or community member. Menkiti posits that personhood is not automatically granted at birth but is achieved as one gets along in society. For him, it takes quite a lot of time to accumulate knowledge of social values and norms, thus the more knowledgeable in terms of these values the *more person* you become. This has implications for the notion of child traditional Africans hold. The idea that some children may fail to become persons corresponds with the Platonic child that never becomes adult. In fact, Plato (1941) asserts that “some... (*children*) never become rational, and most of them only late in life” (p. 138). In this sense, there seems to be a relationship between the Platonic “child” and the traditional African view of it where some adults will remain “children” despite their age because they fail to meet the social criterion of an adult. Similarly, young individuals and children are *lesser persons* because they still have a lot to learn about the moral requirements of their communities. Consequently, one becomes a person as one gets older and more accustomed to the ways of one’s respective

community. Conversely, one remains a child as long as one fails to meet the criteria for personhood that adults already have. Describing this attainment of the status of a person through gradation and socialisation, Menkiti (1984) writes that:

...personhood is the sort of thing which is to be attained, and is attained in direct proportion as one participates in communal life through the discharge of the various obligations defined by one's stations. It is the carrying out of these obligations that transforms one from the it-status of early childhood, marked by an absence of moral function, into the person-status of later years, marked by a widened maturity of ethical sense — an ethical maturity without which personhood is conceived as eluding one (p. 176).

Gyekye (1997) has a different understanding from Menkiti's above. He opines that an individual is not completely defined by the social structures that he/she finds herself/himself in. Although many of our goals are set by our existential communities, it is still open for individuals to make their own choices and decide on what goals to pursue and what to give up. It is unsurprising that Gyekye (1997) holds that:

the communitarian self cannot be held as a cramped or shackled self, responding robotically to the ways and demands of the communal structure (*thereby*)... reducing a person to intellectual or rational inactivity, servility, and docility... the self, nevertheless, can from time to time take a distanced view of its communal values and practices and reassess or revise them (p. 55-56).

Echoing this view, Bell holds that although the community is seen as prior to the individual that view does not absolve the individual of her responsibility and it does not deny the individual identity of person. Upholding community does not necessarily deny the individual "her potential creative role in a community ... (*however*), as multicultural factors increase, new values are placed on older ones — the African concept of community must be revalued in the light of the present

realities” (Bell, 2002, p. 64). Despite acceding to the place of community in the understanding of the individual in Africa, Bell, like Gyekye, is of the view that this understanding must not be at the cost of individual recognition and responsibility. These debates will resurface in Chapter 9 where I attempt to situate “child” in a community of philosophical inquirers in the context of contemporary Africa.

At this point it may be vital to speak to the manner childhood as *beginning* is esteemed in traditional African communities. The question is: What is the meaning of *beginning* and what are its implications? The notion of beginning is acknowledged as the lack of experience, with the necessity for support, with something deprived of its own highest value, with the start of an arrangement beforehand determined, or even with the first part of an outlined whole (Leal, 2005). Similarly, childhood in its association with the concept of *beginning* buttresses the notion that children need understanding, adult help, and hence protection, and they are *not yet* ready. I submit that this stage in human life implies an age of absence of responsibilities, the lack of autonomous thinking and of the seriousness in dealing with life’s significant issues. Again, it seems as if childhood has been socially and historically associated with this idea of lack, absence or incompleteness. Such an understanding places the adult universe at a vantage point of filling, completing what is supposedly missing. In pursuit of this examination, I agree with Nandy’s (1987) analysis that “To the extent adulthood itself is valued as a symbol of completeness and as an end product of growth and development, childhood is seen as an imperfect transitional state on the way to adulthood, normality, full socialisation and humanness” (p. 57). The idea also suggests the child is a deficit savage who needs to be delivered from the remains of human backwardness. However, this does not sound plausible since children, despite their inadequacies in terms of many adult performances and expectations still have the potential to achieve the adult expectations, as they grow into maturity without taking away the humanity in them. The fact that they lack these capacities in their present positions due to their age does not make them savages. Some adults may fail what some children can do so does this warrant them the label *savage*?

The dangerous physical background of traditional Africa may form the starting point for explaining the cultural milieu in which the child exists. On this view, common patterns were cultivated within the context of a communocratic and organic principle. Especially given the “climate, insect, and endemic diseases, ...the society was tightly organised, communal in nature with kinship systems in extended families ... (*forming*) a network of relationships that carried benefits and obligations to each other” (Valentine & Revson, 1979, p. 375). Again, African culture, like any other, also recognises that childhood is a shaky state where the young must be sheltered and granted support in conformity with the cultural ends. Meanwhile, the value of children in Africa, as elsewhere around the globe, is elevated. The adult members work hard to ensure children’s survival and proper growth. Therefore, Africans are devoted to the appropriate development of children as well as to their security from all forms of physical, social and intellectual harm (Ncube, 1998). For example, among the Shona people, right from day one after birth, while in the care and protection of the mother, extended family member and neighbours come and congratulate the mother “...for giving them yet another member in the family and neighbourhood” (Muyila, 2006, p. 17). Children are born in and live within families, and similarly families exist within a matrix of neighbourhoods and communities. In this way, for children, this social geography has a profound effect on their childhoods and well-being. Gelfand (1965), when referring to the case of the Shona people of Zimbabwe’s value for children, writes, “The Shona people, like any other African societies, display an intense desire to have children, and if a woman does not fall pregnant or desire to have children, and if a woman does not fall pregnant and give birth to a living child, her family goes to any lengths to find a remedy” (p. 19).

Communities lead the child toward his/her final social integration until through old age and death he/she leaves the community of the living to join the community of the living dead; the ancestors. In the above case, I recognise a relationship between the Western and African value of children as regards the protection and development of children. Yet, at the basic level, differences start to emerge as every culture has its own conception of what comprises appropriate child rearing and

care practices. The question that needs attention in this study then is: If child is a protected member, how much autonomy is he/she granted to explore and reflect on the beliefs and doctrines held true by his/her respective communities? In brief, how much freedom to inquire and interrogate is granted to the young in such contrived circumstances?

While closer scrutiny of African conception of childhood reveals pointers to the effect that the traditional paternalistic society regards children as empty slates in need of security and training for adult roles, such a perception of childhood is universal and transcends most cultures, with children considered immature, dependent and therefore in need of training. On this view, children are a kind of “*not yet*s” who lack qualities of adult members of the community. This conception of child goes to affirm the Aristotelian conception of child as “unfinished” relative to a human end. The child is viewed as unfinished biologically in his or her growth as a human animal, ethically in the training of virtue and politically in the education for adult life as a responsible citizen. Similarly, the notion of unfinished child in both the Aristotelian view and the traditional African view denotes that while human nature is not yet fully realised, it will be realised as long as it is properly protected from harm and the haphazard influences that may change the course of or damage its natural growth. Traditional African children are “citizens in waiting” and are “potential bearers of rights, which they may exercise only when they have reached the age of reason” (Arniel, 2002, p. 70). If childhood is thus defined as a process of becoming, adulthood is seen as a finished state. In this sense, adult qualities such as rationality, morality, self-control and “good manners” clearly make adults privileged above children while the goods of childhood are less valuable. In effect such a traditional African conception “...locates children within the (macro) social structure and is more interested in the systematic denial of their agency” (Garaudy, 1975, p. 128). However, not every adult can be adjudged a finished product since some may fail to dispose values expected of adults. The goods of lovingness, naturalness, freshness of vision, frankness and sincerity, and imagination that characterise the child’s life are downplayed in the traditional African communities. Instead, institutions such as educational and other

socialising agents are established not as violent or destructive forms of power but rather forms of discipline meant to produce docile subjects through processes of training, correction and normalisation. The question of how education systems are utilised for this end will be examined in the next chapter.

While the increasing rate of globalisation has led to tremendous transformation, especially in the West, with children viewed as holders of their own rights, most African communities still look at childhood as a stage in human development whose participants, that is children, are deficient in many spheres of life and therefore in need of control and improvement through socialisation and education. I view such an understanding of child in the African sense fulfilling the Aristotelian explanation of the child's transformation and movement from unfinished to complete in which the family and others in the neighbourhood form the "actualised" beings; complete human beings whose role is to ethically aid the potential child to *become* fully human beings; the process which brings the child to "normal" ethical completion. For their sake, parents must instil good habits from an early age. Metaphorically, this is associated with horticulture rather than natural growth; "...of preparing good soil, of rooting out weeds, of training young shoots in the direction you want them to go" (Cunningham, 1995, p. 48). One notices here an emphasis on control, regulation and discipline. The process of socialisation along these lines can best be described as "...a battle... a form of combat where the headstrong and stubborn subject has to be 'broken', but all for their own good" (Jenks, 1996, p. 71). As we shall see in this study, this standpoint has direct implications for ways of educating children, as well as how it affects critical, creative and caring thinking when children from such backgrounds undergo formal schooling in the modern sense. Also given the strong religious inclination of traditional Africans, childhood entailed a spiritual component based on the belief in reincarnation. Children are believed to be reincarnated ancestors who lived and died in previous decades who, sufficiently revered, have reappeared in the newborn. This entails that children are not only accorded respect by members of society, but society takes it upon itself to protect and socialise the child in the culture of the group. However, there is an apparent contradiction. If ancestors are

reincarnated as children, why the need to socialise the children since upon their departure of earthly lives they (ancestors) were fully socialised and well respected for their wisdom of cultural beliefs?

One of the basic philosophical principles of traditional African society is group solidarity and social harmony. This is demonstrated by the harmonious bond between the individual member and the group. The individual is viewed in terms of the collective. It is not just the immediate family, but every member of the community that has the duty to take care of the child. On this view, “...everybody is responsible for the other” in this extended family system which is “a very large baobab-like institution” (Hansungule, 2005, p. 382), where virtually nobody is excluded. Undoubtedly, the child keeps in contact with the larger group and is convinced that life is not only about the immediate family, but about seeing beyond one’s family. The Akan people of Ghana respect the artistic symbol of the chain as a symbol of human relationship. The meaning of the symbol is as follows: “we are linked together like a chain; we are linked in life, we are linked in death; persons who share a common blood relation never break away from one another” (Gyekye, 1997). Given this image of child, I submit that the child is a saviour child; a noble child who has the power to assume adult duties to the point of salvaging others in his/her community; making sacrifices for the good of others. Also characteristic of such a child is the commitment to forego his or her personal interests for the good of the community. Furthermore, “the child has to submit not just to parental authority but also to the communal authority” (Muyila, 2006, p. 14). Such a domination of the community demands that the child abandons individual needs in pursuit of group interests. In so doing, I agree with Nyasani’s conclusion that the individual child in such a context of African tradition hardly knows how to act except to keep included in the context of his community’s prescriptions and proscriptions (Nyasani, 1997). As will be discussed later in this research, such virtues groomed in the traditional African child inform the community values in Philosophy for Children.

Drawing from these assertions, I am persuaded to accept that in traditional Africa, everything boils down to the “me” in the “we” or rather the survival of the self for group enhancement and consolidation (Nyasani, 1997). Rousseau observes in such form of relationship the inequality of power and status that denies and destroys the natural equality and dignity of man. He concluded that the child in society is first forced into unhealthy docility before being “...taught a set of values that presuppose one man’s being able to master the will of another” (Rousseau, 1963, p. 76). The above observations have implications for the development of the child, socially and intellectually, as we shall see in the analysis later in the study. But, the critical question is: To what extent is the perception of child in the traditional African sense permissive of children’s opportunities to form their own opinions and express their viewpoints in a decision-making situation? In other words, are there opportunities in traditional settings for children to be reasonable, creative and caring thinkers?

The traditional African child is a socialised being from birth in the authority dimension, which is based on the principles of age and seniority and which is made up of the mother, elder siblings, father, elders, ancestors and God. Adults depict the child’s life outside the home or neighbourhood as full of danger, thereby seeking respectively to protect their children, and thereby denying them autonomy. This weakens children’s trust in their own authority. It comes as no surprise that even the African Children’s Charter Article 27 endorses this dimension by stipulating that “[e]very individual shall have duties towards his family and society”, while under Article 31(a) the individual shall also have the duty to “...work for the cohesion of the family, to respect his parents, superiors and elders at all times and to assist them in case of need.” (Sloth-Nielsen & Mezmur, 2008, p. 164). The two articles are rooted in the African belief that adults have had sufficient experience of life and are ethically complete due to their own earlier training, while children’s cognitive faculty for deliberation is not developed, which renders them not-yet-fully capable of choice. Writing about the Shona peoples of Zimbabwe, Gelfand (1965) further illustrates the previous view by pointing out that:

Almost every Shona reveres his parents. Not only does the child love them, but he looks up to them and accords them proper respect. He listens to them, seldom argues with them and tries to avoid causing them pain. *Honour thy father and thy mother* is far stronger in the Shona than among the Europeans (p.16).

In my personal experience among the Shona people described above, as parents become older their children's respect for them increases, because they will soon be in the next world where they exert considerable power over their offspring. In concurrence, Muyila (2006) posits that "Advancing in age means continual improvement and accessibility to more rights, power, knowledge and wisdom" (p. 42), thereby leaving the young child at the lowest level of society without rights, power and knowledge. Erny points out that traditional Africans perceive a child as:

...a man in the state of nature, not yet changed by society, naked like the first human beings, without a feeling of shame, ignorant, unconscious of his condition and destiny with an intact body and an intelligence which is still opaque and veiled (Erny, 1981, p. 23).

As will be argued later in the study, the current conception of a child as an "enclosed" being can be challenged by promoting the voice of the child that gives them some form of participatory role through engaging in dialogical deliberations in issues that affect them and their age group

For traditional Africans, childhood becomes a stage when children can claim no knowledge and wisdom, which are largely based on experience. This reinforces the notion of the Lockean child, who is a citizen in the making, an imperfect but potentially reasonable blank slate to be filled with experience. This view is supported by Dewey (1927) when he comments that "We are born organic beings associated with others, but we are not members of a community... everything which is distinctly human is learnt, not native" (p. 154). This, as earlier observed, leads us to question the notion of children as reincarnated ancestors. Might it follow that when reincarnated as children, the ancestors become blank slates? If so,

should the living beings respect those without experience for that matter, that is, children without experience? In this sense the child gains knowledge from experience and it is not inborn. For Locke, the parents should have control over their children as children do *not yet* possess the knowledge and therefore the rights of adult citizens. Similarly, Africans believe children, if left without the help of adult members, make mistakes that will not serve their best interests and those of their families and the community. The older members of society accord themselves the roles of the custodians of knowledge. Hence, they believe, they deserve respect. Similarly, it is only the eldest members of society whose opinions carry the greatest weight in social matters; what might be referred to as epistemological authoritarianism as will be detailed in Chapter 4.

In addition, children are considered not yet fully rational, only coming to be as adults. But, is reason, if not actual knowledge, innate? If it is not, is it something that is acquired in the course of human development through learning? Locke's theory of parental authority, just like the traditional African view, assumes that children lack what adult human beings possess, as children are merely new arrival travellers in a novel country of which they know nothing. In this sense, the "newcomers" need experience to stock their minds with ideas and experience. In support, Rousseau holds that parents have an obligation to induct children into active membership of their society. He observed that, as individuals, our value depends on the community to which we belong (Dewey, 2008). Downie (1971) adds that children should be "...directed towards socially permissible or desirable ends" (p. 65). This paradigm does not neglect childhood but situates it as a lower stage to greater achievement. I find such views limit children's critical and creative power, though Cassidy (2006) is of the view that the limitations often placed on children are meant to make them "...know their place in the hierarchy that is in our society" (p. 3). Similarly, the traditional African sense of childhood that perceives children as "...passive beings awaiting their temporal passage into the social world and the adult rational world" (Woodrow, 1999, p. 10). This view denotes a relative absence of an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect between adults and children in which adults fail to accept the potentialities that children have as rational beings.

In the traditional African sense, there is a lack of recognition of the child's capacity to reason, an absence of the sensitivity to the child's interests and a failure to appreciate children's questions. Practically, parents tend to dismiss outrightly children's open and interesting outlook. Children are accorded little opportunity for questioning and challenging decisions that affect their lives.

Children in traditional Africa leave all decisions about their lives to be determined by a different age group with very different interests and outlook on life, without their own input. But if one subscribes to the school of thought that knowledge has some kind of independent existence and has irresistible power; that a person who possesses knowledge inspires awe, whatever the domain in which he exercises his knowledge (Erny, 1973), then children rightly deserve their relative autonomy to create and possess knowledge for suitable to their own age range. Consequently, children should be perceived as a deserving group of human beings equally endowed with the right to articulate informed decisions by engaging in dialogue with their own world in order to make meaning out of it. This may be justified by Locke's assertion that "curiosity in children is an appetite after knowledge... the great instrument nature has provided... to remove that ignorance that they were born with... (*without which*) they will become dull, useless creatures" (Locke in Ulrich, 1957, p.372). While the children have the propensity to be inquisitive, in the case of traditional Africans, as we shall observed later in this study, any allowance and disposition to question adult knowledge is a sign of disrespect of adult members.

However, I agree with Sloth-Nielsen and Mezmur (2008) who hold that the duty to respect parents, elders and superiors expected of African children (though not unique to Africans alone), as reflected in the Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC), is a positive tradition and an asset in the upbringing of the African children. They further posit that the duty to respect "...does not entail docility or unquestioning subservience... [but] encapsulates the widely shared value that age brings with it wisdom, knowledge and experience and that this requires that seniors be given due credit" (n. p.). Nonetheless, I query the amount of parental power in

caring for children and rearing them to a point when they can act and decide on their own. Such a perception of childhood in the traditional African sense reduces the place of “child” to a dependent of the adult. This understanding of childhood is also lacking what defines the adult experience. The fact that children’s judgements are fallible does not justify the assumption that they are unable to judge. As Vico (1944) puts it “The age of childhood is reasonable but it has no material on which to reason” (p. 145). In other words, what children lack is the experience of the world but their logical prowess is developed enough to work with the information they obtain. They are only beginners in the art of interpreting their world. I posit that contemporary thinking should focus on and consider the child as possessing unique characteristics, needs and interests. I argue that it is not so much an adult which is yet to be, but more the person in the child capable of interpreting their world as it is now and not the adult world, which is external to them. The experiential worlds of child and adults differ in complexity so there is no need to measure the child’s world against the adult world.

Most traditional African societies do not use age as social criteria for distinguishing children from adults. Among traditional Africans, “rather than using age to define social status, social status defines age” (McNee, 2004, p. 25). For example, in West African societies, an uninitiated person would remain a child in the eyes of society regardless of age (ibid). Furthermore, in African thought, a person becomes a person after the envioning community gives him or her personhood; what he refers to as “the processual nature of being” (Menkiti, 1984, p. 127). It seems to follow that only through some process of incorporation, socialisation and ritualisation can children graduate into persons. Children, therefore, are considered to be “mere dangles to whom the description ‘person’ does not fully apply” (ibid). In this light, therefore, without a long process of social and ritual transformation, which accord the child “the full competencies seen as fully definitive of man” (ibid), children and newborns are referred to as “*it*”. Such a perception of childhood bestows on young members of the African society an object status, with older individuals positioning themselves in the subject position.

It is important to note that in most traditional African communities, individuals know where they stand in the family and community structure. An individual does not want to doubt his or her status, nor does he or she seek higher status than the one they are entitled to or try to gain unfair advantage over fellow men. Those who use their personal positions to either elevate themselves or use others for reaching higher statuses are accused of being witches or sorcerers. This goes as far as strictly separating daily routines and duties along the lines of gender. As a result, division of duties is inculcated from the very early years with male members, including boys, allocated responsibilities usually accompanied by risk of injury such as carrying something heavy, milking cows and going into thick forests to hunt wild animals. On the other hand, women and girls are usually responsible for collecting firewood, making clay pots and cooking food for the family. This understanding in the context of traditional can be explained in the metaphysical sense in that boys (and later men) are repositories of creative power whose goal is to increase and multiply and, likewise, girls (and later women) bring forth children to their husbands. This shows how, among the Shona and many other African communities, the girl-child is said to be weaker and therefore inferior to her boy counterpart. In the case of a young child assuming responsibilities and tasks that are designated for the opposite sex, the whole family is disturbed and labels such behaviour abnormal. Therefore, among the Shona, for example, the whole family becomes unsettled if such tendencies persist to a point where a child is said to be afflicted by some evil spirit. At this point, they engage services of a witchdoctor for cleansing. But, the question then arises: How does such a gender-based demarcation set up by the family translate into a child-to-child relationship in a formal school set-up? To what extent do learners whose backgrounds insist on gender-based discrimination work collaboratively and caringly in a modern school environment? These are some of the debatable issues that my study will seek to analyse in the chapters that follow.

In addition to the procreative function of man and women, and even from childhood, the traditional African background enhances creativity in all individuals. As Dzobo (1992) writes, "The creative process...is seen as embracing

the whole of man's (*woman's*) life and his (*her*) relationships. The individual is to grow in the development of a creative personality and to develop the capacity to maintain creative relationships" (p.131). This calls to question two issues. The first is the notion of creativity through relations with others. Of note is the emphasis that traditional Africans place on Ukama (relationality) as a product of creative cooperation of individuals as will be explained in later parts of the study. The second is the denial of the notion of creativity, especially with children. As discussed earlier, traditional Africans tend to suppress individual initiative and inquisitiveness, especially in young members of society given that, they allege, this leads to undermining authority, as well as the promotion of individualistic tendencies. But, based on the above assertions, how does the former enhance creative power, especially in the growing members of society?

I also need to unpack the African conception and the concealed meaning of the term "*to have children*", which is frequently used in popular speech to express the relationship between adults and children. Everyday language speaks of "How many children do you have?", "We have seven children" or "We have eighty children in our family". Such expressions represent possession of some form; that is, it equates having children with *ownership, possession and guardianship* of children. This also implies that because they are owned, therefore they need to be protected from any form of danger and deflection that may cause them to stray from adult or parental possession; they are "property". It also gives a representational image of the Kantian child, which portrays children and wives as possessions of the head of family — the father. This view concurs with John Stuart Mill's *children* who must be "continuously protected from themselves as well as external threats to their safety" (Turner, 1998, p. 145). Mill appears convinced that children are fundamentally vulnerable. Such is the African perception of child in the traditional African sense with child as property of both the immediate family, as well as the concerned members of the extended family. In fact, the child is "our child" in the essence of the community. This gives the impression that among traditional Africans, children as individuals are not taken seriously because it is

believed that they do not know what they want or need. The perception is of children as objects or possessions whose views do not really matter.

From an ontological viewpoint, human being in the African sense, just like in other societies, is not only a *being in the world* but also a *being with others*. However, from “child” as being in the context of traditional Africa is a relationship being and the humanity of the child is not a solitary adventure but rather “...a conquest of community” and even if the “...‘I’ is alone, his aloneness is related to others” (Garaudy, 1975, p. 148). Despite their age, Africans hold that the children may not live a full humanity without existential complementarity with the others. Within the family of others, the child finds love and communion, thereby underlining the essence of human being. On this score, the child is expected to be in relationship with maternal and paternal grandparents, as well as cousins of both families. But the question is: How much space do these surrounding parties allow the child to express their views on matters that are of interest and concern to them, as well as to have their views taken seriously? Given the characterisation of childhood and the conception of child explored in this chapter, to what extent do the African and western perspectives permit the child the freedom and right to know and be heard? This draws me to engage Miranda Fricker’s conception of ‘epistemic injustice’. (Bai, 2006; Lansdown, 2001; Shusterman, 1997).

Fricker argues that people can be distinctively wronged in their capacities as ‘knowers’. She identifies “testimonial injustice as involving someone being wronged in their capacity as a giver of knowledge” (p.7), especially if the speaker’s statements are given undeservedly low weight because the listener has prejudices about a social group to which the speaker belongs. It takes away the individual’s capacity as a knower, as a reasoner and therefore as a human being. Given the traditional African and even western conception of childhood and of the incomplete, ignorant, *human-in-the-making* child, one might be persuaded to conclude that such characterisation involves epistemic injustice. Hence, doing philosophy with children in Africa, as has been initiated in other parts of the globe, can be instrumental in advancing testimonial sensibility as “...something that

governs our (*including children*) responsiveness to the word of others..." (Bai, 2006, p. 154) as will be discussed in Part 3 of this study. The second form of injustice Fricker calls *hermeneutical injustice*, which occurs when " ...someone is trying to make sense of a social experience but is handicapped in this by a certain sort of gap in the collective understanding – a hermeneutical lacuna whose existence is owing to the relative powerlessness of a social group to which the subject belongs" (Shusterman, 1997, p. 69). For Fricker this kind of epistemic injustice results in a "situated hermeneutical inequality" (p. 70) in which the subject is unduly deprived of submitting one's social experiences intelligible, to the other and to oneself.

While on the one hand traditional Africans conceive "child" as *a not-yet* as explained above, they contradict themselves when they expect the same "child" to participate and contribute to the welfare and survival of the family by providing labour such as taking care of young animals and tending the fields, including providing daytime care for their younger siblings, thereby adopting adult responsibilities. Thus, compared with the West, the African conception seems to grant more participatory roles to children. Ncube (1998) writes "...the idea of a totally dependent child who is fed, clothed, educated and generally brought up at the expense of his parents is a concept which is alien to the traditional African setting" (p. 21). As children participate in adult work, it enhances their feeling of recognition and consequently increases their self-confidence and the sense of competence from an early age. Besides, children can also be "lent" to the extended family to provide labour, especially to take care of elderly relatives. Meanwhile, they will be receiving training in their future cultural roles. In addition, it is by so doing that children are trained to appreciate the value of kinship, family, relatedness and in the final analysis community from an early age.

The traditional African "child" can also be best described as a "community child" as he or she goes through initiation rites. It is through these processes of incorporation into the community that the community puts its fingerprint on the child with the latter receiving instructions of adult life from the adults. Through

circumcision for boys and cliteridectomy for girls, the initiates are made to accept and conform without the chance to question the morality of it, otherwise they face the risk of being ostracised and branded outcast. The rites “...serve the communities, analogically, like baptism among Christians” (Muyila, 2006, p. 30) and bestow honour not only to the initiate but also to the family. The above goes to explain the traditional notion of child as a *not-yet* whose being only confirmed by the rites of passage. The child will only be recognised as an adult person when he or she has gone through certain stages of development and acquired appropriate knowledge and skills through community initiation. In traditional African communities “...there is no fear of growing old, no fear of life. One’s prestige increases, ...he has new roles to play which are specific to this state...” (Erny, 1973, p. 88). Thus the faster one grows, the greater the prestige and children seek to leave childhood as quickly as is possible. This distinguishes the traditional African definition from the age-determined United Nations Convention for the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) definition that stipulates 18 years as the mark for adulthood.

Broadly speaking, “child” in Africa will also be compartmentalised into the traditional person who is little affected by modernisation, the transitional person often living in and shuttling between traditional African and Western cultures, while the modern individual is one who participates fully in the activities of the contemporary, industrial or post-industrial world (Peltzer, 2002a). The traditional child is socialised into the authority dimension based on the principles of age and rank in which the child gains knowledge and behaviour patterns which focus mainly on his/her conduct in the company of elders, as will be discussed in detail in Chapter 4. The traditional child is taken over by the family, the group and the community and remains dependent upon the group and its values and customs. As will be discussed in Chapter 9, the traditional African child has no intrinsic value outside the network of kinship and therefore remains dependent on the group and its values thereby solidifying the *ukama* ethic. As Okeke et al put it, “ the concept of locus of control in African societies generally tends to focus on external rather than internal attributions”(Okeke, Draguns, Sheku, & Allen, 1999, p. 151). On the

other hand, the transitional child is no longer belonging to the the group as the former , since he he is individuated through “...an emphasis on competence, competition and the desire to excel” (Peltzer, 2002a, p. 89). He or she becomes the property of the reproductive couple and hence the breakdown of the group superego. To a large extent, the child’s socialisation takes place outside the family and socialisation takes place through formal schooling, the media and the peer group. As Agiobu-Kemmer puts it, “the traditional person is socialised primarily by people, while the western person is socialised by objects” (Agiobu-Kemmer, 1984, p. 91), leading the former to developing more of the social intelligence as opposed to the latter’s technological intelligence. In these regards, the traditional child is endowed with the qualities of respect, obedience and conformity while the transitional child and the modern child have inclinations towards curiosity, originality, exploration and individualised practical play related to objects (Peltzer, 2002a). Hence, Mundy-Castle associate the two categories with the western culture in which western intelligence seems to favour an object orientation, with a strong aggressive concern for control and exploitation of the environment (Mundy-Castle, 1985)

While I concur with the categorisation suggested by Peltzer, it is necessary to remark that my analysis will take care and avoid the risk of “...succumbing to stereotypes and glossing over the heterogeneity and complexity of psychological phenomena in Africa” (Peltzer, 2002a, n.p.). For this section, however, the focus is on traditional Africa; what can be referred to as “the unadulterated Africa, that is, prehistoric Africa” (Boakye-Boateng, 2010, p. 107). In this context, the concept of child and childhood in African thought surveys deeply into the African understanding of characteristic features that constitute a child and childhood, respectively. Hence, when we ask what a child is, what the nature of a child is or, more fundamentally, who is a child, the response is what has been described as “a departure from the metaphysical and empirical realms to the sociological-normative realms which engages an inquiry into people’s perceptions of cultural and personal identities” (Fayemi, 2009, p. 167). This view implies that the notion of a child becomes specific to a culture. This is justified by the observation that

children's development is a social and cultural process and children do not grow up on their own but learn to think, feel, and communicate and act within social relationships in the context of particular cultural settings and practices, coupled with culturally specific considerations of how children should be treated and what it means to be a child (Richards & Light, 1986; Schaffer, 1996; Woodhead, 1998).

3.4 Summary

From the observations made in this chapter, we see that in their traditional life, Africans hold a strong view about what a child is and how childhood appears to them. The conception of child in the African sense is not unique from conceptions held elsewhere although there are some particularities that seem exclusive to African communities. Childhood and the concept of *child* in traditional African societies was used in considering the relational and contextual aspects of the African notions of personality, as opposed to the western conceptions which separates the individual from the social background, thereby emphasising the prominence of the *self*. The traditional African worldview of childhood holds that the child is delicate and needs protection just as in the western world, although in the later the child can only become a fully recognised person through some processes of incorporation by ritualisation, and training and socialisation. For the traditional Africans, to be a child is to need the aid of parents or (legal) guardians, although this also applies to a lesser extent in the west. An outstanding feature of the notion of "child" in traditional African societies is one of "child" "...as dependent on adults — innocent child, evil child, and adult — in- training and child as commodity.." (Sorin & Galloway, 2007, p. 5). Child is also viewed to some extent as a saviour child, noble and responsible for others around him or her. What is lacking in this continuum of perceptions is the agentic child. The concept of child as agentic is more recognisable in the west than in traditional Africa, although both conceptions have little to offer the child in terms of being a capable actor who shares power with adult members of the human species. It has been observed

above that traditional Africans perceive children as primarily weak, ignorant, irrational, incompetent, unrestrained and uncivilised.

From the above observations, two central questions emerge:

1. From the essentialist notions of childhood given above, to what extent can Philosophy for Children provide a panacea for the epistemic injustices that societies, especially the communocratic African social structures, inflict on the child?
2. How can the African perspective of Philosophy for Children be structured to curtail the undermining of the place of the child in 21st century Africa?

While the discussion in this chapter gives some picture of what a child in traditional African communities is, a void remains in the analysis. Implicit in the explorations of this study are the following challenges for debates:

- Is it possible to speak of a pure traditional African child?
- Can we discern a traditional child given the age of westernisation, industrialisation and globalisation and urbanisation?

One may point out that urbanisation itself as a value and such other concomitant values as Western education, technology, and industrialisation have brought about a completely different mental posture towards what childhood is and consequently, what it is to be a child in Africa today. What this chapter did not do justice to is to provide an analysis of the nature and character of education that explains the conception of child and childhood in traditional Africa. It is befitting that a close examination of the philosophical foundations on which such perceptions were grounded be done. Coupled with this is an analysis of the methods of education used in traditional African communities. This is the central business of the Chapter 4.

Chapter 4 Education in Traditional African Societies

4.1 Introduction

The term education has been assigned a variety of meanings by different scholars and philosophers. One finds “no univocal definition of education as the concept has been exposed to different and often contradictory interpretations” (Bolagun, 2008, p. 228). Yet, Hamm (1989) has proposed that we can have a clear understanding of the concept of education if we isolate it by the uses to which it is put. White (2007) uses school aims to explain the concept of education by identifying them as personal fulfilment, social and civic involvement, contributing to the economy and practical wisdom. Situating education in the context of Africa, Adeyima and Adeyinka (2005) have concluded that education should aim at enabling individuals to survive in a society, cultivate good habits and develop good citizens capable of earning a good living. The common thread that runs across their conception of education is its function in developing goodness.

While Ducasse (1958) refers to the etymological root of the term as coming from the Latin word “educere” (p. 1) which means to “lead out”, Schofield (1972) prefers “educare” which means to “form” or “train” (p. 32). Despite the diversity of interpretations of the notion, for this study I will confine education to three categories. First, I look at education as the activity of transmission of a heritage from one generation to the next for the continuity of a culture. Second, I place education as the heritage and the paraphernalia that the individual receives to be able to integrate himself into his community. Finally, I posit that education is a factor of social change, with individuals involved in it becoming transforming factors of their culture. Deploying Hamm’s three uses of education could assist in further clarifying the concept of education. The sociological use implies that education is an instrument used by societies to develop and conscientise new members and entrants (including children) to know and understand the beliefs, values and the ways of life of a people or group. As for the education that goes on in formal institutions, Hamm (1989) refers to it as the “institutional use” of

education (p. 30). The third use of education for Hamm is the “general enlightenment use” (p. 31). This use combines the earlier two uses. While education is meant to socialise individuals and developed through (in most general terms) formal schooling, it is supposed to serve the development of the individual’s mind through the acquisition of a particular kind of knowledge and understanding. The question then is: To what extent does traditional African education fit into these definitional categories, given that the notions of “individual” and “community” feature clearly across the three goals? Is it education for communality or education for individuality?

Writers on traditional education throughout sub-Saharan Africa have given generalised accounts of this system of education based on the assumption that, because these societies were non-literate, traditional learning was everywhere much the same, with minor variations (Callaway, 1975). Although certain tenets tend to be identical throughout Africa, as indeed in all societies, it is apparent that traditional education varied to the same degree that societies differed from each other. In spite of the variety in forms of social organisation, reflecting differences in the levels of socioeconomic as well as political development attained prior to Western colonisation, one finds in the education domain in Africa a sizeable amount of common traits which point to the cultural unity of the African peoples. Across the geographical and regional divide and in all tribal groups, traditional education attaches great importance to the social and collective nature of life, the intimate tie with social life, the multivalent character of its means and ends, and its gradual and progressive achievement. While there can be no one African culture and therefore no one education, African cultures, as Dei (1994) clearly puts it, “have more in common with each other than they have, for example, with European culture(s)... (*thus*) ...beyond ethnic pluralism and cultural diversity there are underlying commonalities or affinities in the thought systems of African peoples” (p. 6). As will be argued in this study, African cultures tend to share certain cultural elements more commonly than they do with other cultures outside Africa, whether Western or Eastern.

This chapter seeks to explore the concept and practice of education in traditional African societies. I attempt a critical examination of the following issues of philosophical concern:

- The notion of traditional African education
- The philosophical foundations of traditional African thought and practice
- Traditional educational practices in Africa
- Cardinal virtues and challenges
- Pedagogical instruments used in African tradition

The notion of “child” and “childhood” discussed in Chapter 3 will be linked to the current chapter by showing how the African philosophy of childhood has impacted on the ways in which children are socialised and educated and vice versa. This will act as a springboard for an argument for an African perspective of philosophy for children. I will argue that the socio-philosophical influences embedded in traditional African education have a profound role in the ways in which young Africans today engage in critical, creative and collaborative thinking in the modern-day classroom. Once again, my personal experiences coupled with a discussion of the pertinent literature will inform the arguments in this chapter.

4.2 The notion of Traditional African Education

The Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (1990) defines tradition as “... the passing down of opinion, beliefs, practices, customs etc from past to present; especially by word of mouth or practice” (p. 1174). I consider “traditional” to mean the inherited values from the past, and the “traditionalist” therefore becomes one who preserves this heritage. Tradition, in this context, becomes the action of transmitting or handing down from generation to generation; the transmission of ideas and rules, especially by word of mouth or by unwritten practice. I understand traditional African education as the process of transmitting values and customs rooted in African cultural heritage. Traditional African education thus refers to Africa’s heritage in education. It is “...the education of the African before the coming of the European — an informal education that prepared Africans for their

responsibilities as adults in their communities” (Boateng, 1983, p. 322). But, how relevant and valuable is traditional education to modern-day life? Are all values from Africa’s educational heritage suitable for the 21st century?

An appeal to past traditional values and beliefs is contentious in the present world, as will be shown in Chapter 8. Critics of tradition call for a rejection of the past by advocating a total concentration of and exploitation of modern opportunities to ensure the acquisition of optimum benefits for the African peoples (see Bodunrin, 1991b; Hountondji, 1983b). More specifically, Africa has been accused of having no long-standing tradition of written evidence of thoughts and practices, and so is said to be lacking a heritage to draw upon. Based on this, sceptics about African thought have found ground to dismiss the collective community thoughts held in unwritten form; without any one specific thinker as the source. Such collective thought, according to Wiredu (1980) is “...the common property of all and sundry, thinker or non-thinker” (p. 47). For instance, Wiredu is critical of African folk thought, and rejects it as non-philosophy insofar as it does not provide supportive arguments, though he acknowledges that “...it can be comprehensive and interesting in its own account...” (ibid). I have argued that to determine a practice as non-philosophical thought only on the grounds that it lacks argument and clarification is a narrow conception of philosophical activity as discussed in Chapter 1. I argue that a people’s worldview can readily be considered the bedrock on which to found their thoughts and practices, especially using argumentation, clarification and analysis as tools. As will be shown, the proverbs, folktales, myths, puzzles and riddles used in traditional African thought and education are not mere doctrines preserved and transmitted from one generation to another but they are rather ideas subjected to critical scrutiny by all parties involved. Some would charge that tradition is fading fast and that it is “...simply no longer able to provide the thread needed to keep the social fabric of social life from unravelling” (Gross, 1992, p. 3). For them, the process of the fall of tradition creates a fertile opportunity for newness and creativity. While I appreciate the dangers that are implicit by retreating to the so-called “better” past rather than responding to our world as it appears to us, I hold that it would be foolish for us to ignore *totally* the

spaces of experiences and meanings that have been nurtured for generations, and on which we can draw for insights about nourishing our own lives.

There are numerous aspects of tradition in Africa and elsewhere that can be recovered, reclaimed and reconstituted by Africans today in their endeavour to reproduce and better their lives. People appreciate and structure their identities in terms of the traditions that make them. Fay (1987) illuminates this position by arguing that "...coming to be a person is in fact appropriating certain material of one's cultural tradition, and continuing to be a person... means working through, developing, and extending this material, and this involves operating in terms of it" (p.160). I argue for a return to those aspects of traditional African education that were and are still deemed valuable and can therefore inform educational reconstruction, especially in the education of children in Africa. Scanlon (1964), in reference to education, points out tradition is inescapable, whether one reaffirms it or repudiates it.

Some European scholars have doubted the authenticity of African traditional education by asserting that Africans had no history, no civilisation, no culture to perpetuate and therefore no education to talk about prior to the introduction of Western formal education (Amimo, 2009). For instance, Hume (1748) precluded Africans from the realm of reason and civilisation when he wrote: "I am apt to suspect the Negroes, and in general all other species of men (for there are four or five different kinds) to be naturally inferior to whites...There never was a civilised nation of any complexion than white" (p. 87). Similarly, Hegel (1892-1896) categorically states that "Africa is no historical part of the world; it has no movement or development to exhibit" (n.p). In addition, Kant agrees with Hume and Hegel as he asserts that "...so fundamental is the difference between two races of men, and it appears to be as great to mental capacities as in colour" (Kant in Thomas, 1997)⁶. By labelling it "primitive" and incapable of yielding a framework of theories and philosophy and in the process relegating African traditional

⁶ Footnote cited in Eze, E.C. (1997) .

education to the periphery, these scholars have contributed to a blanket denial of indigenous African education, history and rationality. I concur with Ocitti's (1973) dismissal of such scholars and others who argue that "...since the Africans knew no reading or writing, they therefore had no systems of education and so no content or methods to pass on to the young" (p.105). These thinkers need to be reminded that every society, in some way or the other, has values that have transcended generations. No traditional way of doing things, if subjected to the criteria based on modernity, will pass the test in total, and this is also the case with traditional African education. The criteria for checking on the relevance of the system of education against the 21st-century education in Africa will help find a range of flaws as will be discussed, because not all that is applicable to tradition works in the present. The way a people view their world, their lives, in fact their worldview or philosophy of life will, in a significant way, influence the forms of socialisation and education that they transmit from one generation to another. These values may be transmitted either wholly as they are through socialisation, education and training or with some modification. Traditional African education was and is still relevant in a number of ways, as will be established in the sections below, notwithstanding the implementation challenges of modernity.

4.3 Philosophical Foundations of Traditional African Education

Each human society is characterised by a social arrangement or a designed order of roles closely connected to the economic and political standards as well as the sanctions of the community. The beliefs we hold about children's learning are firmly founded in our own convictions about what it means to be knowledgeable, intelligent and experienced, and what it takes to become so (Ackermann, 2004). Whether implicitly or explicitly stated, it is these convictions that drive our attitudes and practices towards what to transmit, how to pass it on and when the process of such transmission should take place. In short, it is clear that all systems of education, formal or informal, are rooted in the worldview of a people that practices it; if by worldview is meant a set of presuppositions which a people holds about the make-up of their world; what Vlach (n.d.) defines as "...the overall

perspective from which a person or group both consciously and unconsciously understands and interprets the world...” (n. p.). In addition, every society, whether simple or complex, has its way of training and educating its youth (Fafunwa, 1974) although the goals and methods of approach would differ from place to place and culture to culture. Studies by some philosophers on Africa have revealed that African ways of life, beliefs and values were rooted in some philosophy just like the Indians, Americans and the British had philosophies relevant to their existential circumstances (Gyekye, 1987; Serequeberhan, 1991; Wiredu, 1980). In the sections that follow, I present a case for the ubuntu ethic as the central philosophy of traditional Africa around which the principles of communalism, humanism, wholism and perennialism gravitate. I seek to demonstrate that the aims, nature and character, and methods of traditional education are all underpinned by these principles.

4.4 The concept of Ubuntu

Ramose (1999) describes Ubuntu as a socio-ethical necessity which is not restricted to the Bantu-speaking people alone who use the word but pervades other sub-Saharan ethnic groups sharing similar ideals that characterise ubuntu. He observes that, “...ubuntu may be seen as the basis of African philosophy. There is a ‘family atmosphere’, that is, a kind of philosophical affinity and kinship among and between indigenous people of Africa” (p. 49). Eze further explains Ramose’s understanding of ubuntu as a philosophy as well as a culture (Eze, 2008) on which African philosophy is founded and as a term used to describe the quality and essence of being a person in most sub-Saharan Bantu speaking peoples.

To explain the African philosophy of *ubuntu*, Ramose starts by noting that the word needs to be hyphenated *ubu-ntu* thus comprising of the prefix *ubu* to imply “be-ing” and the stem *ntu* to evoke “human” (Ramose, 2004). He further elaborates that ontologically there is no literal separation between *ubu-* and *ntu*, thereby signifying the one-ness or the whole-ness of being. However, the word *ubuntu* becomes apparent in meaning when connected to *umu-* and *ntu* to form

umuntu, which denotes literally the idea of a human being. From another but related angle, *ubuntu* is a descriptive word that connotes the quality of human-ness by determining whether *umuntu* (human being) is living within the proscriptions and prescriptions of *ubuntu* (human-ness) (ibid). The foregoing analysis in Ramose's exposition reveals the principles of humanism in African philosophical thought.

Ubuntu, it can be noted, is not a doctrine or a rule but rather a way of life in which one has to learn how to live humanely with others in a given space and time. It is not as a device for instrumental judgment but rather a social process which guides how people think, choose, act and speak. In effect, the philosophy of *ubuntu* is embedded, derived and best summarised in the aphorism "Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu", which, literally translated, means, "A person is a person through other persons". This perspective defines the concept of person differently from the Enlightenment conception of a person as a rational being, where rationality is the chief determinant of personhood. From the African viewpoint, it is from the dialectical relationship with the envioning community that the individual derives the title "person". This leads me to a discussion of the relationship between *ubuntu* as a philosophy and the communitarian principles thereof in traditional African thought and practice.

The African conception of a person as alluded to in the previous chapter is understood in terms of a set of beliefs, norms and values the envioning community holds dear. In Masolo (2002)'s words the "...identities of persons are shaped by the social worlds in which they play various roles, and are susceptible to change as such social worlds mutate through time and space" (p. 22). This view, unlike the liberal view, leaves human identities to be determined by certain tacit identical tenets, which they share with other members of their group. In the latter case, the individual has autonomy and dignity and therefore should have the freedom to articulate his or her individuality and outlook, which should be esteemed by the community. To what extent do traditional African education and worldviews have a regard for the individuality of the child?

The philosophy of communalism or group cohesion is the way African parents traditionally seek to bring up their children within a community, seeing their well-being in the welfare of the group. Rufus Burrow, in his article *Personalism and African Thought* (2000), affirms that the doctrine of communalism gives authority to the group or society with emphasis on the development and achievement of the community instead of the individual members. He reinforces his position by asserting that “authentic living is a form of participation in African culture ...(*and*) participation and belonging are the essence of human being and therefore provide foundation for emphasis on community” (Burrow, 2000, p. 335). Thus by participating, persons are always related to one another. Participation is an obligatory aspect that links and brings together individuals and groups in a relationship. How then does participation in a group make persons *persons*? This will be discussed in Chapter 9 in the context of the Ukama ethic.

There is a general consensus among many African philosophers⁷ that in traditional African societies, the principles of communality, egalitarianism and solidarity were held true. However, it must be noted that the principle of egalitarianism is contestable, especially given that, for example, the ancestors had higher authority over the living, men over women, and chiefs and traditional leaders over the ordinary citizens. So, it would be a misnomer to refer to traditional African societies as practising egalitarianism in the etymological sense. Nevertheless, former Senegalese political leader Leopold Senghor states that “...Negro-African society is collectivist or... communal because it is rather a communion of souls than an aggregate of individuals...(*there is*) more stress on the group than on the individual, more on solidarity than on the activity, and needs of the individual, more on the communion of persons than on their autonomy” (Senghor, 1964, p. 49 & 93). In this, he gains support from Gyekye (1992), who maintains that the community orientation of traditional socio-ethical thought is located in the “...communitarian features of the social structures of African societies” and, at the

⁷ (see Abraham, 1962; Bodunrin, 1992; Dzobo, 1975; Fayemi, 2009; Gyekye, 1997; Wangari, 2009; Wiredu, 1980)

same time, these features are "...the defining characteristics of those societies" (p.102). The value traditional African societies attach to fellow feeling, solidarity and selflessness is stressed by Gbadegesin (1991) who writes that "...human persons are conceived as communal beings embedded in a context of interdependence sharing the same common interests and values" (p. 65).

Gyekye (1992) proposes that communalism does not negate individualism, although it is a reflection of "the limited character of the possibilities of the individual" (p. 155). His argument is that we should not mistake identification with the group for the swallowing of individuality. If individual capacities are different, their capacity to equally contribute to the community is bound to be different. In this way, individuals in traditional African societies are recognised on the grounds of their merit to some degree. Similarly, the individual as self has a will, identity, hopes and wants, which can be described as unique. However, we cannot deny that the individual has obligations that are community-oriented. These obligations may still exist but their visibility becomes altered. In this regard, the individual gets a sense of freedom, ingenuity and creativity. It is in this respect that I argue for a "self" that is culture-specific: that is an African "self". In other words, traditional Africans have the notion of "self" relevant to African existential circumstances.

While I agree with the humanistic living in a community of others, Menkiti's (1984) assertion in Chapter 3 is rather an inflated image of the significance of the collective. This notion of the person places him or her as a dependent of the community rather than an interdependent member of the community in which he or she is part. Without being submerged in the collective communal world, the individual human person is neither unchanging nor a one-dimensional unit, but rather an intricate and dynamic being. Does Menkiti's conception of the community imply that the self is never no more than a functional part of an ethical community burdened with the community's values and norms that focus on fulfilling the common good? I argue against a community of beings whose members are not choosing subjects or moral agents capable of making choices in terms of values and ends. What then are the implications of this on the education

of children? Is this education for conformity or education for diversity? This debate will be followed up in Chapter 9.

It is mistaken to demarcate societies along communitarian or individualistic lines. Rather, communality and individuality coexist, albeit on separate strata of the same continuum. How else do we explain an individualistic inclination observable in the ways of life of traditional African communities, which the philosophers above declared to be communalistic? I agree with Iyer's (1996) construct of an overarching commonality between the West's concern for individuality and Africa's commitment to the collective. He states that: "All cultures expect conformity within a given framework, and individualism or individuation is tolerated or, in some cases, glorified when it falls within parameters considered acceptable to and supportive of the operative ideology" (p. 124).

It is in the framework of communalistic and normative systems that many Africans mirror and ground their thoughts and actions. From this standpoint of communitarianism, one observes the prevalence in African cultural milieu of an "interdependent perspective of the self with the emphasis on connectedness, relatedness and interdependence" (Mwamwenda, 1999, p. 5). But, the question that arises is, Does African tradition permit individuals to act beyond the realm of one's community prescriptions and prohibitions? Without wishing to endorse relativism, I agree with Nyasani's (1997) observation that "African, Asian and European minds are products of unique 'cultural edifices' and 'cultural streams' that arose from environmental conditioning and long-standing cultural traditions" (p.55-57). What forms the mental structures of individuals from different social, economic and even environmental conditions vary from one people to another. Thus, the African ways of transmitting values is unique and relevant to their existential circumstances. From a communitarian worldview that characterised traditional African communities emerged an education system that emphasises a community ethos in the young members. But, the question that comes to mind is: To what extent can the tendency towards the collective, for the community translate into participation in a *community of inquiry*? Conversely, can a

community-consciousness ethos emphasised in the traditional African societies translate fittingly into children's awareness for caring and collaborative community of inquiry in a formal school setting? This will be explored in the Chapter 9 of this study.

Another important principle contained in traditional African thought and practice is humanism. Among the Shona, as in many traditional African ethnic groups, human beings and their lives are held sacred and all must be done to preserve life regardless of whose life. The sanctity of human life held in traditional Africa should not, however, be taken as exclusive since no culture around the globe does not recognise the value of human life. But, African humanism, coupled with its highest regard for human dignity, gives high priority to human life over materialist values. Dzobo emphasises that human life is the greatest value because "...there is an urge or a dynamic creative energy in life... which works towards wholeness and healing, towards building up and not pulling down, towards synthesis and not conflict" (Dzobo, 1992, p. 227). One may want to attribute the success of humanism in Africa to the fragility of small-scale communities that only survive the hardships through group cohesion and codependence. The harsh environmental conditions cause individuals to seek the help of one another and because of the need for the other, one may conclude that traditional Africans placed a high premium on the preservation of life. Africans conceive human life as a force that continuously recreates itself with its growth dependent on its inner source of power. The human being who counts more than the material and economic values in the African sense is one who has a creative personality or creative humanity, which is the supreme goal of human development. From a strict deontological humanistic point of reference, persons are treated as ends and not means to ends. A person therefore is good not because he is good for something, but because he has humanity to create and so he is a creator of the good. The most important thing about a person is that he or she is a person (Ndhlovu, 1988). Based on this humanistic ethic, the Shona have the following proverbs:

“Mupfuuri haapedzi dura” [*A passerby will not exhaust all your food stores so provide him as much food as you can*]

“Chembere ndeye imbwa yemunhu ndibaba vevana” [*You cannot treat a person as if you are treating a wild animal. Human beings deserve to be accorded the humanity that they rightly deserve*]

The popular aphorism “Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu” emphasises recognition of the humanity of the “other” and signifies that “To be human is to reaffirm one’s humanity by recognising the humanity of others in its infinite variety of content and form” (Van de Merwe, 1996, p. 1). Ifemesia (1979), writing about traditional humane living among the Igbo of West Africa, sees humane living among the Africans as a concept which can be defined as “a way of life that emphatically centred on human interests and values; a mode of living evidently characterised by empathy, and by consideration and compassion for human beings” (p. 2). The proverbs above also go to show that this relationship between individuals understands their value as *human beings* and not only for what they own. People help each other without demanding immediate or an exact equivalent return. Consequently, proverbs emphasise by the virtues of compassion, hospitality, patience, tolerance and respect for the other.

Given the centrality of humaneness, and humanness in the philosophy of ubuntu, I see some contradictions. If an individual is supposed to be respected in terms of his possession of the human potential, why is the child considered an *it* before becoming a person? At the same time, the collective image of members of the community will tend to collectively group members instead of recognising their particularity, their historicity and individuality. This has some ramifications for the aims, nature and character as well as the methods used to educate children in such communities. To what extent do progressive methods of teaching and learning provide a voice and space in a setting such as the one that is founded on the above philosophical principles?

4.5 Cardinal Virtues of traditional education

Based on the philosophy of communalism, it is the responsibility of the community to see to it that children are raised appropriately and that, as they grow into adulthood, they will provide for the older members of the community. The basic understanding is that "...childhood is the foundation which determines the quality of a society... (*Therefore*) societies want to prepare their members to become not only good fathers and mothers, but people who care about life and who understand, both humanely and spiritually the highly unshakeable value of human being that we all are" (Fu-Kiau & Lukondo-Wamba, 1998, pp. 4-5). As a result, the major goal of traditional education in Africa is to produce a complete individual: one who is cultured, respectful, integrated, sensitive and responsive to the needs of the family and neighbours (Nikiema, 2009). It aims at inculcating attitudes and values capable of integrating the individual into the wider society (Fafunwa, 1974; Majasan, 1967). In addition, indigenous education is unlike formal Western education in that it is very practical and pragmatic, and prepares the individual for life passing on the values of life that have been evolved from experience and tested in the continuing process of living. Education, in this purview, is generated within the communities, based on practical common sense, on the teachings and experience of the community. But, to what extent can this inclusive, practical and community character of the traditional African system of education translate into the modern day classroom?

Among the Shona, children are taught that the truth must be told and that if they are found lying they are punished. It is also important that they know that there are certain truths that are not discussed in public (Gelfand, 1973) and, if they are asked about them, they are entitled to reply "I don't know". If one is asked for example: who is your brother's girlfriend, despite full knowledge they, by virtue of the trust vested in keeping information secret, one will always say, "I don't know". It is a virtue to keep family and other social truths secret, especially in public. But does this not validate the notion of epistemic injustice discussed in Chapter 3? How then does this translate to a classroom community of others? If the same child goes

to school, will he/she not find it difficult to operate in an environment of open-minded thinking, criticism and creative thinking? The word *kuvimbisika* (trustworthiness) is used to denote a person who keeps his word and can be trusted. But, the question is: To what extent does this kind of thinking promote an individual child to be psychologically, morally, emotionally and rationally stable and permit for excellence in judgement? This points to an oppressive form of orientation from an early age that forms the child's beginning: one that supports closed-mindedness rather than an open-minded outlook. My experience among the Shona shows how the child's surrender to "non-knowledge, not to know and not to know too much" is a disposition of humility. Kaphagawani (1998) says that such epistemological authoritarianism was (and still is) rampant in traditional Africa precisely because the elders were the only ones held to have all knowledge and wisdom, so that what they said had to be believed without questioning. In other words, adults (elders) have advantage over the rest of the community. In addition, "...these elders claimed to know what was good or right for the society so their ideas were imposed on the non-elderly" (Kigongo, 1992, p. 62). However, this is characteristic of all traditional forms of educating, whether African or non-African. Dewey (2008) acknowledges the authoritarian character as a universal trait of all forms of traditional education. He writes:

(The old education) was predominantly static in subject matter, authoritarian in methods, and mainly passive and receptive from the side of the young... the imagination of educators did not go beyond provision of a fixed and rigid environment of subject matter, one drawn moreover from sources altogether too remote from the experience of the pupil (p. 199).

Despite an individual's personal qualities, in traditional African societies, all forms of willingness to conform to traditional behaviour patterns are highly cherished. For instance, a humble person does not use offensive words nor does he boast of his achievements, show off his knowledge among his elders or look down on those who are less informed than him. In effect, he must not be ostentatious. Honours are

awarded for achievement, successful ventures or services to the community and there is public recognition of services rendered. It is preferred that all people should be the equal, enjoy equal privileges and share the pleasures of nature. One who considers himself superior to others and does not take advice is said to be a proud person and is therefore considered with little regard and is not worthy of attention. Yes, we can talk of sharing equitably the resources of nature but it is practically unrealistic to think of people being the same especially given that all humans have individual differences. Yet, in traditional African communities, children are socialised, educated and in many instances indoctrinated to accept and display these attributes. While the virtues were well celebrated in their time and served the prevailing circumstances, they are challenged in the present situation in Africa, as will be shown in later parts of this study.

Whenever the traditional Shona perform their duties, nothing is done sullenly, nor is rudeness or a sense of superiority displayed. This display of gentleness, quietness and lack of tension applies equally to men and boys. A person who grumbles, finds fault in others and complains about his lot is not considered unhappy but associated with evil and is readily suspected of practising witchcraft. This position can, of course, be challenged not only on the grounds of irrationality, but also on the basis of the relative vulnerability of a docile, unquestioning attitude that promotes conformism, convention and sterility. Children are known to be inquisitive about everything that passes their ears and eyes and for a culture to promote quietness, especially in children, is tantamount to the enforcement of an attitude of docility from an early age, thereby stifling initiative. I agree with the view of emphasising humble submission to communal norms and values but not as far as stifling reasonableness, open-mindedness and a critical attitude. Patience is the capacity for self-control, an ability to put up with the weaknesses of one's neighbours or friends. An ability to control one's anger or bowing to what one cannot solve by physical force is revered if one is said to grow and develop into a respectable person in traditional Africa. Children who display arrogance, brashness and lack of humility lose their recognition, achievements and respect. It is no wonder that traditional Africans would deliberate on an issue at length until they

agree and as such “...consensus is seen as desirable, and dissensus as undesirable, both on epistemic and political grounds” (Horsthemke, 2010, p. 80). But, to what extent can these dispositions in traditional African thoughts and practices transfer into 21st-century classrooms in Africa? How far can children from such cultural backgrounds use their experiences to be creative, critical and caring inquirers in the classroom? These questions are central to the debate in Part 3 of this study.

Sociability, sincerity, honesty, courage, solidarity, fortitude, morality and, most important, the virtue of honour are, among others, the moral qualities constantly demanded, examined, judged and sanctioned consistent with the intellectual level and capacities of the child. So, at home or away from home, we find the child is surrounded by a community of others who determine the way they think and act – a background that has social and cognitive effects on the child’s participation in communities that call for critical and creative thinking. For Dzobo (1992), creativity is the essence of being and “...the goal of man’s existence is to become creative. The only way man becomes human..., is to be creative and productive” (p. 128). While the Shona would revere adults who are critical and creative thinkers, they, to a limited extent, permit children to explore into abstractions and challenge the status quo. To that end, it is into an individual who has developed a creative personality and productive life while maintaining a productive relationship with others that the label “person” is given. This sounds contradictory since a person cannot develop creative power without it having been cultivated from an early age. If a community of family members cannot nurture in the child the creative attributes, it should not expect to have creative adults. However, it is the search for solutions to riddles that challenges the Shona children to think abstractly, broadly and deeply.

Africans generally have a deep and ingrained respect for old age and, even when we can find nothing to admire in an old man, they will not easily forget that his grey hairs have earned him the right to courtesy and politeness. Elders are respected for many reasons – they are believed to be the directors and teachers of the young – they are believed to give the infallible truths and their instructions are

heeded for the protection of good behaviour among the young. Elders are taken to be repositories of communal wisdom and therefore assume approved leadership in the affairs of the people. For Dei, gerontocracy is the traditional African respect for authority of elderly persons for their wisdom, knowledge of community affairs and closeness to the ancestors (Dei, 1994). Many African people believe that old age is accompanied by wisdom and an understanding of the world and therefore it was the duty of the aged to instruct the young in a socially responsible manner and, in return, the latter have the duty to respect the knowledge of the elders. The eldest members of society are said to have acquired, due to their age, profound experience of knowledge and wisdom on societal matters. Knowledge to the traditional Africans constitutes the totality of all that successive generations have accumulated since the dawn of time both in spiritual and practical life, while wisdom entails the proper application of this knowledge for the benefit of society. Traditional African societies regard knowledge and power as general familiarity with the traditions of one's community and their applications as the preserve of those with advanced age. This implies the opposite for children – they lack the knowledge and therefore can only acquire it through transmission from the knowledgeable others, the older members of society.

In a traditional African community there can be no knowledge of reality if an individual detaches himself from it (Anyanwu, 1989). Knowledge therefore comes from the cooperation of all human faculties and experiences. Thus, an individual sees, feels, imagines, reasons or thinks, and intuitively all at the same time (ibid). Only through this does he claim to have knowledge of the "other". In this sense, every individual has knowledge and this knowledge depends on his personal experience. Personal experience in the African sense is not to be confused with self-interested experience, but it is also collective and shared experience which makes the existence of a community of persons possible. This view of cooperative living is echoed in Dewey's (1927) assertion that:

To learn to be human is to develop through the give-and-take of communication an effective sense of being an individually distinctive

member of community... education is a regulation of the coming to share in the social consciousness (p. 154).

But, in traditional Africa there is a need for children to give unqualified respect and obedience to those who are older than them in order to know. Every adult expects respect and obedience from children. On this gerontocratic structure, children can be said to be victims of intergenerational power imbalance, especially when they are refused certain rights, including knowledge and critical interrogation on the basis of their age. While there are methods that are employed to incite reasoning, there appears to be a contradiction, especially when children approach the elders, particularly those in authority. Few options are available for children to challenge the status quo, especially when they have alternative suggestions to those given by the social group. Muyila (2006) cites, for example, the case of the Bukusu community, in which children are not supposed to question decisions made by their parents and elders, even when such decisions are of direct concern to them because "...advanced age is taken as a criterion of not only the truth but also reliability and therefore whatever decision is made by people of advanced age should be taken as it is" (p. 43). Such situations tend to limit the African child's potential to develop a critical and creative attitude, even in issues that affect their adult life.

In their daily routine and practices, I observed that the traditional Shona like precise instructions that are clearly understood by all and dislike vague orders and commands. For any transaction, verbal or otherwise, parties involved must clearly understand what is involved. This desire to have all details clear in one's mind leads inevitably to delay and long discussion with much repetition so that all present understand what is meant. Related to this love for preciseness is the great care taken by the Shona, when introducing a new subject, to clarify all its details. In a Shona village one cannot help noticing that nothing is done with great speed but in a leisurely manner — in a slower, more orderly tempo. A stranger to the Shona world would find such discussions long-winded, but the object is to explain to all concerned what is expected of them. The quality of precision of instructions

is transferred to children from an early age. The question arises, is the disposition for precision extended to children with respect to questioning the beliefs and permanently held community truths? Besides, to what extent can the thoroughness of explanation and search for detail be a virtue in tradition to be emulated in a community of philosophical inquiry?

Every society seeks to socialise and train its young members, the goal being the production of an educated person. Given the above cardinal virtues one may ask: What is an educated person in traditional African thought? Drawing from the Akan people of Ghana, Wiredu enters this debate by submitting that an educated person is one who possesses reasonable knowledge of her culture and environment, and demonstrates the ability to construct and defend her arguments, a good degree of moral maturity with an adequate sense of right and wrong and who, in the final analysis, is tolerant and open to dialogue in interpersonal relations (Wiredu, 2004). In agreement with the Aristotelian view that the child at birth is morally immature, traditional Africans believe the education that the child receives from the family and neighbours leads the child to moral maturity; to one who is “a virtuous individual ...(with) some sense of the constitutive connection between morality and human interests” (Wiredu, 2004, p. 18). But, in the context of this study, could the above dispositions be said to be the goals of doing philosophy with children in Africa in the 21st century? This will be addressed in Part 3 of the study.

Among the traditional Shona people, educatedness is attributed to one’s ability to engage in productive, refined and polished debates with other community members and displaying a willingness to listen carefully to what others say. A demonstration of the capacity to articulate clear and logical arguments at a *dare* (chief’s court) earns one the label *munhu akadzidza* (a learned/educated person). While those who simply follow arguments passively contribute virtually nothing and are vacuous, and offer unreasonable voices, are given little regard at decision-making gatherings. They are often allocated menial responsibilities such as preparing meat for those who engage in more fruitful debates. This is a form of preparation of young members of the community for community leadership roles. Thus, the

selection process starts from small family gatherings with adolescents being allowed to participate in solving family disputes together with their siblings and elder members of the family. At this point, children are exposed to situations that challenge and test their reasonableness. The use of riddles, puzzles and proverbs is meant to check and improve children's wit as will be detailed in the later parts of the study. However, the traditional village would show gender bias towards girl/boy participation in such dialogical practices. Women would be relegated to listeners and girls would be confined to the kitchen just as are boys whose contributions to debates do not reflect the desired rationality. While traditional African education has often been challenged for not promoting any critical thinking, at least boys are accorded opportunities that expose them to exercise some rationality — critical, creative and self-reflective thinking.

In summary, the traditional African-educated person exhibits three cardinal virtues. First, reasonableness — that is, being logical, critical, and self-reflective. Second, moral maturity and refinement — that is, being honest, faithful, dutiful and empathetic to others in the community; and third, contributing to consensual dialogue — that is, listening to the voices of others without necessarily putting down and dismissing others' subjective views as not worthy of consideration. In fact, to the traditional Africans, all that education should lead to is an educated person with a human face, a being with a good character, a humane being (*munhu kwaye munhu akadzidza* — literally, “a good person is an educated person”). Very significant for this study is the question of how these virtues can be utilised in formal classroom to produce a critical, creative and caring person for 21st-century Africa. This leads me to the question of how traditional Africans transmit values and norms to their young.

4.6 Methods of value transmission

Whereas Western theories of socialisation tend to place a great deal of emphasis on the promotion of autonomy, African socialisation values and practices, by distinction, tend to be more preoccupied with the cultivation of social

responsibility and nurturance (Serpell, Mariga, & Harvey, 1993). Human offspring are born ignorant of their group or cultural identity but, in time, they acquire it by socialisation (Nsamenang, 1999). Socialisation and becoming a person are synonymous in traditional African communities. The real meaning of ritual pedagogy is for the child to "...pass from the state of nature to that of culture" (Erny, 1973, p. 26). It is the process of leading him out [*educere*] from the "...marginal state and making him accede to the human condition" (ibid). As soon as the child is old enough to leave his family home, his education is in a large measure the business of everyone. The child considers it normal to be called and sent away on errands by an adult or older child, scolded or corrected, or advised, consoled, revenged or rewarded by them (Moumouni, 1968). The young child completes training by listening to and observing elders, at community palavers and by taking part in the different aspects of social life. Children listen together with other children to the stories, proverbs and legends told by the adults.

During the entire process of physical growth, and intellectual and emotional development, the child is followed by the entire collective of the community, in a direct or indirect fashion. Through daily actions the child progressively is made aware of and comes to realise the material and spiritual basics of social life: values, customs and traditions, and worldviews. Bonds of solidarity and alliance between children in the same age group are enmeshed and reinforced in childhood groups controlled by age. Later these ties also expand between the children and their elders and between them and the entire community. Developing the disposition to listen, not only to instructions given by elders but also to stories told, and to recite and retell them are some of the basic skills transferred to children at an early age.

There are evening gatherings when the father or an elder member of the family tells stories and poses riddles to children of the compound. This provides children with entertainment as well as a form of education. They are asked to repeat the previous night's episode as a test of memory and of narrative expressiveness although this can be criticised for promoting dogma and indoctrination and a denial of access to critical reasoning on the part of the learners. Competition in

solving riddles helps to speed up their natural wit. Such evening sessions thus train children's verbal ingenuity and, at the same time, introduce them to a wide range of oral literature: myths, folk tales, local history, proverbs. For Callaway (1975), "this education gave young people a heightened awareness of moral values, ethical discernments, and the comic and tragic dimensions of human life" (p. 29).

Traditionally, Africans have had well-respected stories and storytellers well-versed in oral cultures and traditions (Agatucci, 2010). Such forms of storytelling, basically, involved a collective participation of every member. There are other accounts, however, in which the storytellers are in a position of unquestionable, autocratic authority. Participation in these daily activities is a necessary ingredient of traditional African communal life. Consequently, "...basic training in a particular culture's oral arts and skills is an essential part of children's traditional indigenous education en route to full humanness" (Olusola, 2010, p. 80). Traditional African culture, like any other human culture in the world, creates stories and narratives as a way of making sense of the world. African stories and proverbs draw on the communal wisdom of the people to articulate their structures of the sense, feeling, thought and expression, hence serving social and moral purposes. Traditional folklore becomes the basic form of oral tradition and a fundamental method of conveying culture, practice and morals, and a way of transmitting knowledge and wisdom, feelings and attitudes in societies such as traditional Africa. But, to what extent can the value of traditional African orature be realised in the 21st century?

The oral tradition is the most significant information-gathering exercise for traditional African education. This involves the collective testimonies and recollections of the past inherited from earlier generations, and transmitted in various forms of verbal testimonies. Both formal and informal processes are utilised for the transmission of knowledge, skills, ideas, attitudes and patterns of behaviour. Tribal legends are told and retold by the evening fireside and, through them; much of the cultural heritage of the tribe is kept alive and passed on to the children. Such oral traditions, narrated with care and repetition, constitutes the

African child's training in what was often a complicated linguistic system without a script. The oral tradition remains "a reservoir of inexhaustible wisdom where Africans learn about their origin, history, culture and religion, about the meaning and reality of life, about morals, norms and survival techniques" (Omolewa, 2007, p. 598) . If one were to enter a traditional African village, even today, one observes how any adult who happens to be free can enjoy teaching children traditional games, including counting, puzzles and riddles, and reciting children's poems. This does not leave out grandparents who, by virtue of old age, play a central role of imparting their acquired wisdom and philosophical ideas of the community. As the elders theorise and teach oral literature that covers fables, folk tales, legends, myths, proverbs and stories, children receive their socialisation and education. Through the indigenous stories, children's thinking, knowledge and attitudes are extended. They are, in the process of storytelling, exposed to creative thinking skills, as well as the capacity to imagine and understand their world, thereby synthesising, refining and redefining their experiences to open up for future possibilities.

Besides, traditional African stories provide learners with distinct social and cultural experiences. Folk tales reflect the traditional culture from which they originate and so their preservation and transmission contributes to the preservation and transmission of the people's culture. However, preservation and transmission, in essence, may imply the curtailment of the dynamism expected of a culture. On their positive side, stories told around a fire arise from real-life experiences and child listeners often find them linked to their daily lives. Such stories provide a fantasy world, but coming from children's real-life experiences, they allow children to face their fears and frustrations and, in the final analysis, they acquire the essential survival skills. As much as traditional folk tales are vehicles for teaching the *community's* value system, they also teach the basic common virtues of love, honesty, courage, hospitality, compassion and goodwill.

Fables in the form of trickster stories convey moral lessons, and are more pedagogic devices rather than literary pieces (Abraham, 1962). Common among

the Shona are stories often told of how *tsuro* (Hare) always managed to trick and cheat *gudo* (baboon) on every occasion of their interaction. One such story is when the two parties agreed, upon the initiative of *tsuro*, to boil each other in a big clay pot. *Tsuro* entered first and when he was burning, he called out for help and baboon removed and saved him. When it was *gudo*'s turn, *tsuro* went out to add more firewood to raise the temperature in the pot. When baboon felt the heat and was burning and cried out for help, *tsuro* started to celebrate, shouting "tsviramo" (literally meaning, "you, burn!"). Most of these tales are carefully constructed to inculcate the societies' values into children without necessarily and formally telling them what to do and how to do it. In most of these stories, a catalogue of likely tricks is set out in the story form and successful countermoves are described.

Riddles are a method of instruction that is crucial in imparting knowledge and sharpening memory and reasoning ability of both the young and the old (Gwaravanda & Masaka, 2008). Gelfand (1979) writes that "...this method of instruction is useful in forming the memory and reasoning powers of the child. In his attempt to solve the riddles, he has to consider different possibilities and probabilities and, through repeated questioning, he comes to know many features of life" (p.131). Riddles test children's judgment, and solving a puzzle or a riddle is a source of great intellectual pleasure. It may involve a game in which one child challenges another and the winner is one who knows most (Gwaravanda & Masaka, 2008). The asking and answering of riddles is formulaic. A child or elder challenging another invites him to swap riddles. The game continues until one of them finds he has no more to ask. When one person or group admits exhaustion of riddles they may pose, the other group claims victory and so becomes the more knowledgeable. In this sense, traditional Africans recognise riddles highly for possessing the ability to assist the young gain social values as well as equipping them with yardsticks to measure them.

In the African context, proverbs decorate speech. They are symbols of communication and at times form sub-languages of their own. The language of proverbs finds expression for a whole perspective on the world, and thus

constitutes a means of tapping into societies' view of reality. Proverbs are a stimulus towards knowledge, wisdom and morality. They can be analytical and can challenge assumptions to inspire further reflection. They criticise, praise, advise and teach. In Africa, proverbs cover every aspect of human endeavour and human relations. In effect, proverbs are rich sources of African wisdom and philosophy (Omolewa, 2007). As Mbiti (1970) writes, "Proverbs, which are the most important type of aphorism in Africa, have a deeper meaning than stated literally, a meaning which can be understood only through the analysis of the social situations to which they are appropriate" (p.2). Although not amounting to philosophy, African proverbs contain a great stock of ideas that generate various philosophical issues, metaphysics, ethics, epistemology, and in science. To understand the implications of an African proverb, one has to appreciate the social situation from which the proverbs arose. For instance among the Shona to say, *Chara chimwe hachiswanye inda* (literally meaning, "one finger does not crush lice") cannot be correctly interpreted by someone who does not understand an environment in which lice, common especially among the impoverished people, are eliminated by singularly crushing them using their fingers. Due to their frequently impoverished situations, Africans had no alternative methods of removing the lice from their clothes or blankets, save for the use of the finger –hence, the aphorism. In essence, the proverb is meant to express the collective/ communalistic character of human beings living together. More illustrations will be drawn from some Shona proverbs in Chapter 9. The proverbs of a community or nation are in a real sense an ethnography of the people, which, if systematised, can give a penetrating picture of the people's way of life, their philosophy, moral truths and social values (Akpobaro & Emovon, 1994). In Africa, proverbs differ in terms of function and level of theoretical meaning in respect of time and place. For example, among the Yoruba, the proverb has become so interwoven with living speech that it can be heard at any time and on each occasion. Proverbs also serve as means of achieving clarity and conciseness in discourse. The Yoruba say, "A proverb is the horse which carries a subject under discussion along; if a subject under discussion goes astray, we use a proverb to track it", to indicate that in every statement made to reflect decisions taken by Yoruba people, proverbs are vehicles used in driving

home their points (Fasiku, 2008). Proverbs in this case throw light on the lived experience and serve as important pedagogical tools. Hence, as will be demonstrated later, they may be used as essential case material on which pedagogical reflection is possible (Kanu, 2007). For example, the Shona say, *Kandiro enda kandiro dzoka*, literally meaning, “the plate goes and the plate returns”. This is meant to emphasise the reciprocity principle to the participants. It amounts to saying if a neighbour offers you a plateful of maize-meal powder (when you have none in your home), you must remember to return to the original source the same. This does not imply revenge or an eye-for-an-eye type of retribution. By prising apart the proverbs and stories, people are able to reflect on the meanings and implications embedded in the experiences. Traditional African education draws on these teaching devices to informally structure educational programmes that encourage learners to listen to stories and proverbs and reflect on them to derive meanings that inform and guide conduct (Kanu, 2007).

Closely linked to fables are myths and legends that are told about the different communities. Myths and legends not only supply accounts of the community’s origin, but also relate precedents to present-day beliefs, actions and codes of behaviour (Segy, 1975). It must be pointed out, however, that in many African societies, while myths may not refer to what actually happened, they are not wholly untrue. Myths are at times only exaggerations of history in the same way as what is supposed to be history may only be a mythicised event. For example, below is a South African myth about Van Hunks and the devil.

Jan van Hunks, a Dutch pirate in the early 18th century, retired from his eventful life at sea to live on the slopes of Devil’s Peak, Table Mountain. To escape from his wife’s sharp tongue, he often walked up the mountain where he settled down to smoke his pipe. One day a mysterious stranger approached him and asked the retired pirate to borrow some tobacco. After a bit of bragging, a smoking contest ensued, with the winner’s prize a ship full of gold. After several days, Van Hunks finally defeated the stranger, who unfortunately turned out to be the devil. Suddenly, thunder

rolled, the clouds closed in and Van Hunks disappeared, leaving behind only a scorched patch of ground. Legend has it that the cloud of tobacco smoke they left became the “table-cloth” — the famous white cloud that spills over Table Mountain when the south-easterly blows in summer. When that happens, it is said that Van Hunks and the devil are at it again. (<http://www.roadtravel.co.za/news/article4.html>).

However, in African societies, much history contains myths and many myths contain historical truths (Boateng, 1983). Besides supporting authority, myths in traditional Africa often prop up morality, ritual, law and sanction. By ensuring common understandings, which sustain intergenerational communication, myths seek to rationalise the existing order where “subjects find subjection less irksome... when all are convinced that the existing order is divinely inspired” (Boateng, 1983, p. 328). From the above, one can identify and distinguish elements of speculative thought. Myths are, as Gyekye (1987) writes, “... imaginative representations of religious or philosophical (metaphysical) ideas or propositions; they presuppose conceptual analysis and conceal philosophical arguments or conclusions” (p.15). The use of myths as a mode of doing philosophy is, of course, not unique to traditional Africa as Platonic philosophy, for example, essentially employs the mythical style. Likewise, traditional Africans use myths to ask questions that concern the essence of life, death, the nature of reality, human destiny, and the origin of God, to mention only a few. What is of significance for this study is the extent to which the above methods develop in children critical, creative, caring and collaborative thinking as doing philosophy with children in the 21st century. To what extent can the methods of inculcating traditional African values be engaged as the stimulus for developing communities of philosophical inquiry in the classroom? This is the subject for exploration in Part 3 of this study.

4.7 Summary

In Part 1, philosophy has been examined as a people’s worldview, an activity, and an academic discipline of study. As a product of a culture, philosophy in the

context of traditional Africa is “ a human response to experience as well as the beliefs and ideas which enable human beings to live meaningful lives” (Ruch & Anyanwu, 1981, p. 82). As a worldview, African philosophy is shaped by perceptions provided by Africans’ experience of their world.

It has been noted that Africa comprises numerous and different ethnic groups, cultures and traditions, with each one employing pedagogical methods of its own to bring to the fore the formation of a specific type of personality. Given such divergences, is it appropriate for one to lump together the education given in the East African Rift Valley, that of the mountain people of the Cameroons, of the Islamised peoples living on the rims of the Sahara Desert and that of the Central and Southern Bantus? Is this the appropriate and pertinent use of the notion of traditional *African* education? Traceable commonalities expose themselves with particular force in childhood education and socialisation although one may need to avoid impetuous oversimplification.

I have shown how children are raised as an integral part of the larger group. This structure of African communities impacts on a child’s upbringing. Adults in the community have unconditional power over the children. The community establishes its own conception of childhood, which determines how children should be treated. Children are generally seen as missing the basic features of adulthood; and, to attain these defining characteristics, they have to pass through specific detailed rites that eventually bestow adulthood on them. The intergenerational adult-child imbalance in power places the child at a major disadvantage in terms of relationship with the adults and more so with elders. Power, knowledge and wisdom are vested in old age; hence, the elders map the direction that their communities take. Children therefore find their lives exclusively determined and directed by people with different interests and who only expect respect and submission from children. It is therefore a matter of “the authority talks, the child listens”. The teaching methods in traditional Africa embody some good and bad practices when mirrored in light of the educative process in modernity. The rigid expository methods of instruction compel learners

to rote memorisation of large chunks of content materials. To a large extent, learners are not encouraged to construct their own questions on the content taught with teacher pronouncements taken as absolute truths coupled with harsh punishment to ensure compliance and obedience.

However, traditional African education has as one of its virtues the adaptability to the learner environment. Taking place informally during the course of living in the home and in the community, children come to be educated through what they experience in their interaction with objects in the physical and social environment. Through participation in the day-to-day activities of adults, children learn many skills of immediate practical value while value systems, attitudes and norms are largely picked up through the silent experience of living in the society. As Bueren (1998) observes, “Certain traditional practices by their very nature reach down the heart of a community and may even be regarded by members of that community as important in defining that community’s identity” (p.17). However, these are reinforced by dogmatic lectures with the result that children are pressured into total acceptance of cultural practices and ways of life dominating the respective community. Hence, children, at an early age, are made to appreciate the value of community.

A great deal of African philosophy is rooted in African cultural beliefs some of which are worth courting (Makinde, 1988). While some of these beliefs, such as the practice of witchcraft, superstition and female genital mutilation, may be outmoded in the 21st century, and some ought to be forgotten, others are so fundamental to the African heritage that there is need to preserve, revise and improve them. Similarly, there are those contentious one that require a more critical investigation, analysis or refinement in places to render them harmonious with modern African circumstances, including beliefs that contradict Africa’s present beliefs and those that are congruent with the modern experience, both of which require further analyses. However, I will argue that these critical and controversial issues can be relevant for philosophical inquiry and form the stimulus

for doing philosophy with children in the 21st century. I will elaborate on these issues in detail in Chapter 9.

It is undeniable that traditional African education includes intellectual training of the child. An important place is reserved for the complete control of language, community discussions, narrations, stories and legends and to abstract thought, in admittedly limited ways such as riddles and proverbs, and discussion of various problems. The ability to reason and form solid judgments is considered extremely important despite the number of theses that have been put forward to denigrate the wisdom and the philosophy of the elders in Africa, south of the Sahara and the accompanying absence of individuality, especially among young members of society. Outside the realm of religion, traditional African education, with its whole series of processes, develops logical reasoning and the critical spirit through riddle games and other forms of folklore.

Part 1 has also presented an argument for the place of proverbs alongside myths, folktales, riddles and puzzles, and beliefs of traditional Africans as ways of doing philosophy with children. But, the question for further debate is: Can these traditional modes of doing philosophy be used to produce a unique philosophical system especially with children in the 21st century? Here we notice the debate between the universalists and the culturalists, as discussed in Chapter 2. While the universalist position would maintain that the philosophical ideas of one people are not (necessarily) different in all respects from those of another people, the culturalists insist on the particularity of philosophic thoughts to a specific cultural context. As will be shown, while there are common strands in philosophical thought in both the Western and traditional African worlds as contained in the proverbs, myths and folktales, such ways of doing philosophy are most effective when they are located in the situation or context of the users; in the case of this study the 21st century children in Africa. In the main, the methods of educating the young discussed above, as well as the ways of doing philosophy with children discussed, are not unique to the African tradition, but are characteristic of most traditional communities, although some communities have outlived these modes

faster than others. If we accept that the traditional Greek and Indians engaged proverbs, myths, puzzles and folk tales as ways of doing philosophy, it would be inconsistent to deny accepting the same modes as sources that informed traditional *African* philosophy.

Part 2: Philosophy for Children through the Community of Inquiry

Chapter 5: The Milestones for Philosophy for Children

5.1 Introduction

Philosophy and “child” are notions that seem to have a constant presence in our daily vocabulary (Storme & Vlieghe, 2011, p. 299). What is less common and perhaps missing altogether is any reflection on the relation between them. However, we begin to encounter this relation in notions such as “philosophy for/with children”, or even in philosophy of education. Education, on its fundamental level, is about relations between adults and children (Kennedy, 1999a). The needy and incomplete child subject has provided the history of European and Anglo-American educational theory and practice with an object to be educated (Gibbons, 2007). Children and childhood’s subjectivity, in the view of adults, are construed as disordered and in need of correction. In Haynes’ *Children as Philosophers—Learning Through Enquiry and Dialogue in the Primary Classroom*, the child is portrayed as both work in progress, a philosopher to be, and as the locus of philosophical thought through which the teacher can construct a challenging and thoughtful curriculum (Haynes, 2001). Though the notion of the child is omnipresent in our daily language, it is surprisingly less manifest within philosophy of education as a discipline. Gareth Matthews (1994) constructs the expression “Philosophy of Childhood” to refer to what is a coherent reasonable conception of childhood in which he presents a set of essentials for what informs an adequate philosophy of childhood.

In the history of philosophy⁸ children's capacity to reflect philosophically has not received systematic attention (Lipman & Sharp, 1978c). Children's thinking was regarded as rudimentary and undeveloped compared with that of adults. In addition, the conception of philosophy held by many for centuries was that of a complex, fearsome and difficult subject for most adults and so it was unimaginable to offer it to children. However, I agree with Haynes (2001) when she notes that "...what is appropriate education for children [has] altered substantially over time" (p.93). It is not surprising that most subjects were (re)constructed to be available to children in the elementary school; yet, for a long time, philosophy as an academic discipline remained the province of the university, at least in most countries. However, for the greater part of the 20th century, many countries in Europe and Australasia have included philosophy on the school curriculum with some notable success stories recorded in France, Germany Belgium, Spain, United Kingdom and the Scandinavian countries. To this list Canada, United States of America and Australia and New Zealand have recently been added.

The questions that come to mind are: To what extent does this understanding of philosophy provide pedagogical value to practising philosophy with children? Is philosophy suitable for children or, conversely, do children find value in doing philosophy? Can children be allowed to be philosophical and philosophy to be child-like (Kohan, 2011)? Is philosophy suitable for children? And, in the final analysis, what do philosophy and children offer each other? In this chapter, I attempt to address the above questions and assertions by exploring the meeting place(s) of the notions of child and philosophy Gareth Matthews' conception of the Philosophy of Childhood. "Philosophy" and "the child" collectively form the object of this study, as explored in Chapters 1 and 3, though the preceding focus was on the general understanding of philosophy and the notion of child in the context of traditional Africa, respectively. In the current chapter, I return to the

⁸ For instance before Romanticism, children's thinking was undervalued with children themselves holding low social status and considered non-persons.

two notions as they form the bedrock in our understanding of the notion of Philosophy for Children, especially as understood from the Western/Lipmanian perspective. I will argue that although the two approaches may differ considerably in the details of their perspective for education, for philosophy, and for childhood, contemporary programmes, such as Philosophy for Children that propose to educate children through philosophy, uphold the two on a similar plane. In addition to these observations, I will present in this chapter a genealogy of the notion of Philosophy for Children to help facilitate an easier understanding of what it means to do philosophy with children. In what follows, I present an overview of the historical development of the notion of Philosophy for Children by signposting the fragmentary proclamations in the texts of select ancient, medieval and modern philosophers. I attempt to examine how, in the history of educational ideas, have philosophy and children been linked.

It has been claimed elsewhere that philosophers in the Western tradition have not written about children systematically (Lipman & Sharp, 1978a; Turner & Matthews, 1998). However, remarks concerning the epistemological, metaphysical and ethical standing of children, including their sociopolitical status that they should be accorded, are widespread throughout their works. Philosophy for Children represents a certain transformation in the goals of teaching and learning, and this has ignited the curiosity and eagerness of a large number of people, including theorists in the history of education, especially in the West. The modern understanding and conception of education of children can be traced to the philosophy and pedagogy of John Dewey, though I hold that his precursors and predecessors occupy just as central a position as his.

My adoption of the history of the education of children approach is best justified by Cox (1996)'s assertion that history "...tells us more about the present than what it tells us about the past; is more interested in looking to the past for traces for the present than in reconstructing the past for its own sake" (Cox, 1996, p. 27). I therefore attempt to connect the past with the emergence of the Philosophy for Children initiative. The aim of this chapter is not to exhaust the thoughts on the

topic under review, which certainly is unachievable. Rather, it is meant to serve as a preliminary appraisal that opens up certain significant landmarks, including the features of doing philosophy with children that have been in existence over time, thereby contributing to the foundation of the Matthew Lipman-initiated Philosophy for Children programme. I argue that their value has not disappeared but is still prevalent in present-day pedagogical attempts such as those proposed in Philosophy for Children. In interrogating the markers of Philosophy for Children, I explore a wide range of philosophical questions that are interlocking in their nature and their answers. The following questions are, if answered (or at least attempted) by thinkers in the tradition of philosophy, education and childhood, will facilitate our understanding of Philosophy for Children as explored in Chapter 6:

- Are children capable of philosophical thought?
- Can all children do philosophy — i.e. despite certain cognitive or socioeconomic challenges?
- What possibilities are open if children learn to do philosophy?

I propose that to answer the above, there is a need to explicate the following topical issues that transcend both the history and tradition of Western philosophy and education to demonstrate the founding of Philosophy for Children in Lipman's context: a) the centrality of thinking in schooling; b) the sociality of dialogical inquiry as a method of learning; c) the value of experience in the learning process; and d) the need for reflection in the educative experience.

5.2 What can philosophy and children offer each other?

Philosophy played a significant role in ancient Greece, especially in the education of the youths from the elite families. As shown in the dialogues of Plato, Socrates challenged these select few to discuss a range of topical issues, for example, the virtues of friendship, love, justice and piety. In essence, philosophers are people, according to Socrates, who devote themselves to exploring the nature and essence of abstractions such as the meaning of "human being". As Kohan (1995) observes,

“...it was idle wonder that moved the first philosophers to philosophise” (p.27). Socrates marks the beginning of the place of philosophy as doing in order for one to lead a practically good life, rather than transferring knowledge as something universally compelling from one person to another by teaching. He himself could have asked: Can philosophy be taught? For Socrates, what makes childhood extraordinarily important are the permanent marks that are received in those first moments of the human life cycle (Russell, 1961). It is against this backdrop that Socrates proposed that “...special attention will be given to those first stages by the designers of the Republic, not so much for what children are but for what they will become” (p. 339).

Arguably, Socrates thought that no single person can possess universally agreed upon wisdom or virtue but rather every human being needs to look for the truth to live a good life personally. But, the question is: Does this include children? Socrates recognises philosophy not as a body of pliable, grand knowledge intended for or understood by only a particular group. One is tempted to argue that it may be due to his undogmatic stance to the nature of knowledge that Socrates never bothered to leave behind any one sentence in written form as his philosophical doctrine. But, does it follow that existing doctrines have no value at all in the education of children? Quite the contrary, philosophy is a relentless and enduring search into man’s own activity by considering its means and goals in the dialogic process intended for the goodness of life. In this sense, Socrates is presenting a case for doing philosophy as a way of searching for life’s meaning in which individuals, through dialogue with others, attempt to find meaning in a bid to lead good lives. Bernstein (1991) came to conclude that “...philosophy was the most practical discipline ...because the original meaning of that word in Greek – praxis – referred to the activities involved as the practice of living a “good life” (p. 7). Hence philosophy is the discipline that keeps “...alive the spirit of restless questioning ...” (ibid). Once education has helped philosophers to know the good, Socrates emphasises (Plato, 519c) that they will not be permitted to remain in mere contemplation of the idea but instead will be under the obligation to free all other citizens from the bond of ignorance by mixing and dialoguing with the work

and world of others. This invites a number of questions. For instance, If all of humanity is likely to lead better lives through philosophy, does it follow that philosophy as praxis is open to all? Is philosophy an individual or collective enterprise? Can one individual philosophise for the other, or can individuals engage each other in the search for meaning to self-understand and lead a good life? These questions illustrate some of the epistemological and pedagogical ramifications of doing philosophy, which speak to the emergence of Philosophy for Children in the modern and postmodern era.

Socrates, not without irony, makes a statement that the only thing he knows is that he does not know anything (Socrates, 21d). He places his “teachership” as linked to his skill of questioning and not about doctrinaire and influential business of his knowledge. He argues for a teacher as being a midwife in the birth of wisdom; of what is already owned by the “other” in his or her eternal soul. His doubt of knowledge and the concept of midwife have some pedagogical implications especially on the education of children. In Socrates emerges the progressive view of education that locates the teacher only as a guide to facilitate self-thinking in the learner. This suggests an education that accords the pupil the opportunity for “...becoming aware of his own ignorance... (*and thus*) awakes him to think by himself” (Juuso, 2007, p. 28). Probably in it the Socratic view that the teacher’s facilitatory role emerged as used in the community of inquiry in doing philosophy with children. In addition, it is Socrates’ view that everyone can search for the truth individually. He marks the emergence of a permissive educative environment in which both the teacher and the learner share the dialogical role with the hope of both gaining self-understanding and understanding of their world. In this regard, Socrates depicts the significance of philosophy as questioning in a bid to lead meaningful and good lives. Socrates was attempting to establish a new moral and academic discipline based on reason and inquiry through questioning. I agree with Matthews’ (1998) conclusion that “Socratic questioning... began as philosophy for children... Socrates himself seems to have found it appropriate to engage children in philosophical discussion; moreover, he... respected children as philosophical partners” (p. 12), although, in the ancient Greek texts, reference is always made to

young men and not children or women. The Socratic understanding of philosophy appears to have influenced Lipman's conception of philosophy hence he concludes that:

To learn philosophy, one must become actively involved in the life of philosophy and this can only be accomplished by children appropriating the philosophical tradition for themselves, re-enacting it in terms of their own experience, critically reflecting upon it and incorporating the meanings thus acquired into the ongoing conduct of their lives (Storme & Vlieghe, 2011, p. ix)

With regard to collaborative thinking and the open community, Socrates stressed the virtues of dialogue. In the Socratic view, "...philosophy involves us together in a discourse aimed at intellectual inquiry, where we ultimately have nothing but the test of reason upon which to depend" (Cam, 1997, p. 144). But, the issues that require further examination are: to what extent are all members of the human species, irrespective of social status, race, age and gender, exposed to opportunities that allow for philosophical questioning? How can the Socratic initiative be incorporated in educational theory and practice in the present day?

In Book 7 of the *Republic*, Plato seems to have suddenly changed his mind. Socrates refuses the use of philosophy for those who are "too young" in his discussion with Glaucon on the education of philosophers. Hence Plato writes:

...when they get their first taste of it, they treat argument as a form of sport solely for purposes of contradiction. When someone has proved them wrong, they copy his methods to confute others, delighting like puppies in tugging and tearing at anyone who comes near them. And so, after a long course of proving others wrong and being proved wrong themselves, they rush to the conclusion that all they once believed is false; and the result is that in the eyes of the world they discredit, not only themselves, but the whole business of philosophy (Plato, 539b-539c).

Here Plato proposes that philosophy (dialectic) and young people should be protected from one another. His argument is premised on the case that if the “too young” are allowed to do philosophy, their reflections will appear unworthy of adult dialogue. Besides, it would threaten them, corrupt them and contaminate them with anarchy. However, Lipman (1988), in his attempts to correct what he saw as a misconception of the Platonic view of Socrates, writes:

... what Plato was condemning in the seventh book of the *Republic* was not the practice of philosophy by children as such but the reduction of philosophy to sophistical exercises in dialectic or rhetoric; the effects of which on children would be particularly devastating and demoralising. How better to guarantee the amorality of the adult than by teaching the child that any belief is as defensible as any other and that what right there is must be the product of argumentative might? If this is how philosophy is to be made available to children, Plato may be supposed to have been saying, then it is better that they have none at all (p.15).

、 In understanding Plato’s attitude on the question, “Could and if so should philosophy be taught to or practiced with children?” it may be pertinent to observe that during Plato’s times, people had a different conception of “philosophy” and “child”. However, it is noteworthy that we recognise the absence or denial of offering children to do philosophy over a millennium may be attributed to the Platonic notion in the *Republic*. In sum, we can acknowledge Socrates’ contribution to our understanding of the foundation of doing philosophy with children by considering his conception of philosophy from an epistemological viewpoint, namely that:

- knowledge can be pursued, and can lead to an understanding of what is true
- the search for true knowledge is a cooperative enterprise
- questioning is the primary form of education, drawing out true knowledge from within rather than imposing knowledge from outside
- knowledge must be pursued with a ruthless intellectual honesty (Fisher, 1996).

Aristotle has put forward the view that “All men by nature desire to know” (Aristotle, 982b) to emphasise our quest for knowledge. This statement sounds very inspiring, but is it true? Do all people, including children, really yearn for knowledge? At first glance, it seems easy to refute Aristotle by focusing on individuals who are, in this respect, either indifferent or mentally defective. But, he has inserted the phrase “by nature”, which indicates what humans do if they intend to achieve their real potentials. From this, we can infer that by “all people” Aristotle included children. Jaspers (1954) reiterates this understanding of human beings when he claims that we are all philosophical as a general condition of our humanity. “Our own humanity,” he writes, “our own destiny, our own experiences strike us as a sufficient basis for philosophical opinions” (p.10). For him philosophy can be explained in terms of its perennial nature, tracing its ancient origins to our predisposition to “wonder” at and about reality. Hence, he writes, “There is no escape from philosophy, nor is there escaping the fact that we all are, in varying degrees, philosophers... It is not uncommon, to hear from the mouths of children words which penetrate to the depths of philosophy” (Jaspers, 1954, p. 10). Jaspers makes the case for understanding this urge to do philosophy by examining the thoughts and reflections of children. In Jaspers’ view, everyone is capable of philosophical judgement and can engage in the contemplative process in his or her own way, and, importantly, according to Jaspers, with no formal or academic training. In this sense, Jaspers accepts the worldview conception of philosophy, as discussed in Chapter 1, in which philosophy is an individual view, an interpretation of the world as one sees it. Hence, as individuals, each forms their own understanding of the world. Children, likewise, have their own conceptual framework of the world depending on the structure of the concepts that they form.

Two-thousand years after Socrates, French philosopher Michel de Montaigne, emphasised an education of children that will foster the development of their minds, educate their nature and thinking, and teach them (de Montaigne, 2007). For him, that self-knowledge brings life to children and therefore allow them to access philosophy, which makes children wiser and better before teaching them

geometry and rhetoric, for example. By exposing children to philosophy first, Montaigne is of the view that it reveals to the child the purpose of studying what knowing and not knowing are, and many more dualisms characterising everyday life. Consequently, he is of the belief that philosophical discussions should be practical by taking a reasonable attitude towards life; adopting a give-and-take attitude. In addition, Montaigne informs the emergence of Philosophy for Children in terms of epistemological, as well as pedagogical ramifications since, it teaches them, just as it does other age phases, the ability to be judicious — to think by themselves and to act in the present time (Compayre, 1994).

Advocates of Philosophy for Children have in mind the classroom community of inquiry spreading outwards by establishing synergies with other communities thereby leading to mutual transformations and growth (Burgh, Field, & Freakley, 2006; Cam, 2000; Splitter & Sharp, 1995). The assumption here is that the community of inquiry will develop in its members dispositions that are more inclusive and respectful of different cultural backgrounds, including finding spaces and time for children who are either timid or aggressive. Hence, it underscores the place of community in personal development. It is also anticipated that the classroom philosophical community of inquiry will change learner groups and, in turn, future adults into more reflective communities in which democratic practices are engendered. But one can challenge the over-generalisation implicit in this assumption. For instance, what guarantee is there that children, after engaging in a community of inquiry will apply collaborative inquiry practices that transcend the classroom? There is a need, therefore, for close links between the democratic character of the classroom community of inquiry, the democratic school and the resultant democratic local and global community- all originating from a philosophical community of children as inquirers. The understanding is that the classroom community of inquiry does not end at the teaching of better thinking. It is assumed that "... it is a form of life for the children to participate in..." (Splitter & Sharp, 1995, p. 20); and a form of ethical practice in which care, respect and trust among equal partners (Pritchard, 1992) thrives. However, in practice, we find a stark contrast between the open, democratic life of the philosophy classroom and the

children's lives in the home and in their life-world in general. This will be explored in detail in Part 3 of this study.

In *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, one of the most important British empiricists, John Locke, defends children's rights to rational treatment. He gives primacy to experience based on human senses as opposed to the rationalists' speculative "innate ideas". In Plato's rationalism, human reasoning ability was the one thing that allowed people to approach the most fundamental aspects of reality ("Rationalism," 2008). Hence, philosophical attempts to know the nature of "good" or "just" are not mere examination of concepts formed, but rather investigations of permanent things that are accountable for moulding the certainty of the world of senses. Locke proposes an education in which children partake in practices that promote reasoning by taking into cognisance children's age group and natural proclivities. He views children as a precious resource who, however, given their natural inclination to "...curiosity, pride, desire for liberty and want of dominion..." (Gianoutsos, 2006, p. 4), need parents to take care of them during the imperfect state of childhood, thereby informing their minds and governing their actions since they are still ignorant. Because of their ignorance, he holds that they look upon their parents as "their lords, their absolute governors" and stand in awe and reverence of them (Locke, 1996). The Lockean conception contends that the child is born without faculty to understand the laws of nature and so parents are accorded the duty to train children to submit their love of dominion to reason. Locke's (1978a) children are lacking knowledge at birth although he acknowledges that the lack of knowledge does not imply that the children lack natural faculties, abilities and tendencies but, instead, possess natural inclinations of curiosity and liberty. In effect, he concludes that "Curiosity in children is but an appetite after knowledge, and therefore ought to be encouraged in them... (and) without this busy inquisitiveness, would make them dull and useless creatures" (p. 16).

Locke, in Lipman and Sharp (1978), views the child as having the potential to be rational, which needs parental guidance and education to bring the natural

goodness of the child to fruition and advises us to "...treat the child...as a rational creature" (p. 8). Locke places great emphasis on the control of natural qualities, such as self- dominance and power over others, and that states the passions should be submitted to reason. However, he suggests that education should:

...remove that ignorance they brought into the world with them..., although he advised that not to check or discountenance any inquiries he may make... but to answer all his questions and explain matters he desires to know, so as to make them as much intelligible to him, as suits the capacity of his age and knowledge (Locke, 1978b, p. 16).

He observes the important role that children's questioning plays and proposes that adults could even learn from children and therefore should take them seriously while at the same time be honest and frank when responding to their questions. As a result, Locke came to the conclusion that children can understand and reason on the condition that they have experiences to help in understanding, no matter how rudimentary these may be (Oelkers, 1994), and experience alone supplies the mind with its ideas.

Considering children's minds as an empty, inner space or "blank slate" (*tabula rasa*), Locke therefore is of the view that "... 'subjectivity' is *learned* because of outside *influence*" (Juuso, 2007, p. 33). He argued that children must be educated and, in the process, they are brought to reason. He submits that both knowledge and rationality are incremental and children as rational creatures develop the capabilities to reason and grow as they mature. Locke makes an immense contribution to our understanding of the emergence of Philosophy for Children when he suggests that the use of reason is a faculty which is innate, and that its development is a product of an amalgamation of natural maturation and educational encouragement. He attaches the role of a facilitator to the educator; of one who is sensitive to the relentless development into ethical and mental maturity of the child. In addition, Locke proposes that the child has an inclination for inquisitiveness. In so doing, this contributes to the conceptual development of the practice of Philosophy for Children as will be shown in sections that follow.

Adults should thus develop in children the capacity to exploit their potential to be rational. He also stresses the place of the “other” in the development of individual subjective reasoning, with the “significant other” being the parent primarily. However, it is noteworthy that Locke did not advocate teaching children philosophy or engaging them in prolonged philosophical discussions, but he rather provides a backdrop in which philosophy would play an important role to engage children in practices that appeal to reasoning behaviour. The atmosphere of trust and mutuality, which characterises a community of inquiry in Philosophy for Children, has its foundation in the Lockean views. In appreciating the contribution to the Philosophy for Children and the educational process in general, Lipman and Sharp have concluded that Locke should be acknowledged for his “...recognition of the child’s capacity to reason, sensitivity to the child’s interests, appreciation of the child’s questionings and awareness that the child may have a much more open and interesting outlook than do many conventional adults” (Lipman & Sharp, 1978b, p. 9).

In his book *Emile* (1762), Rousseau launches and popularises a new concept of childhood by emphasising childhood’s close link with nature by comparing children to delicate plants and discussing nature’s intentions for children. He emphasised that children are important in themselves and so they have their own distinct way of thinking and intuition. As Mook (2007) puts it, Rousseau believed in children’s “...innate goodness, celebrated their perceived spontaneity, purity, strength and joy, and coined the famous romantic metaphor of the child being a flower in bloom who will best grow under natural circumstances” (p. 104). In addition, Rousseau warned that if the essential natural qualities of tenderness and security were not properly nurtured they would decompose. He therefore proposes that “Nature wants children to be children before they are men... Childhood has ways of seeing, thinking, and feeling peculiar to itself, nothing can be more foolish than our ways for them” (Rousseau, 1979, p. 90). In effect, he introduced in the Western tradition a contrasting new image of a child by proposing that the child at every age “...has an actually attained nature and therefore a proper final cause of his own” (p. 77). Through corruption of natural childhood, children are

vulnerable to the vices of adult society, which he held in disrespect as pretentious and contaminating. Furthermore, he views childhood not as a state of hardship to be got through by introducing adult skills and experience but rather as a state of a living organism that has intrinsic value in and by itself. He believed that children should develop according to nature and enjoy freedom. This for him is only possible if the nature of the child is recognised and respected.

Rousseau produces a romantic combination of nature/childhood/primitivism that called to mind the higher-order state of purity and innocence. He acknowledges children's natural qualities such as self-dominance and power over others and their passions should be submitted to reason, but insisted that these inclinations are part of human nature to which everything else should conform. Basing it on the premise of the original Cartesian mind /body dualism and the accompanying epistemological separation of both adults and children, as well as of nature and culture, Rousseau develops his philosophy of childhood and nature as essentially good. He argues that children should be allowed to cherish their natural senses and feelings, even after developing reason (Gianoutsos, 2006). Both Locke and Rousseau view the child as *becoming* an adult *in* a future society, with Locke's child becoming an individual of action and Rousseau's becoming a simple citizen living a natural life of beauty and ease slightly *outside* society (ibid). We notice how Rousseau points out to us the place of the child and opposed what Polokow (1982) calls "... the impositional structures of consciousness" (p. 21) that an adult world of "experts" has unquestioningly brought to bear upon childhood. From these foundations, one can draw a defence for doing philosophy with children.

As a contemporary of Locke, Italian Giambattista Vico reiterates the need to free traditional ways of teaching by balancing traditional education with children's imaginative power, by commenting that "Just as old age is powerful in reason, so is adolescence in imagination. Since imagination has always been esteemed a most favourable omen of future development, it should not be dulled" (Vico, 1978, p. 20). For him, imagination propels insight into what is being studied and therefore makes learners think more originally. In addition, Vico deplores the idea of

underrating children's capacity to think. Rather, he stresses that children are rational beings, though lacking the materials linked to showing and practising it. Vico (1944) suggests that education should concentrate on exposing children at an early age to experiences that call for the exercise of informed and reasonable thinking. For him "...the age of childhood is reasonable but it has no material on which to reason" (p. 145). To this end, he puts forward the view that argumentation is a necessity and thus should be preferred to criticism since the generation of reasons naturally comes before the assessment of their soundness. Hence, Vico sees children as having sufficient logical powers to process information available to them though they might lack the experience of the world. Hence, a good education for children should provide the experience in which children celebrate formulating arguments.

Furthermore, on the role of philosophy in the promotion of individual reason, Swiss educationist Pestalozzi stresses the centrality of thinking in the education of children. While acknowledging the place of literacy, numeracy, learning and memorisation, Pestalozzi (1994) advises mothers, as representing adults in general, to allow children to be their own agents in intellectual education by encouraging them to think for themselves because they have "...a faculty of reflection, independent of the thoughts of others..." (p. 23). He argues that by so doing at an early age the infant mind develops an active self-thought. He also stresses in his educational ideas the desirability of entering into dialogue with children, thereby developing their natural dispositions in the mind, instead of talking to or explaining things to them without drawing out their own views on the matters under examination. By conversing with the child, bringing him to express himself on the subject, not to exhaust the subject, and by asking him precise intelligible questions, the child's innate faculties of the mind are revealed. Pestalozzi's immense contribution to the emergence of doing philosophy with children, as well as our understanding thereof, has been immense. By suggesting that educational dialogue should aim at developing the inborn dispositions of the mind, he proposes that once such development is activated the mental processes of the child will continue to grow naturally. Hence, he recognises the willingness of

children to think for themselves as well as their need to be cherished as intellectual agents in their own right. Pestalozzi contends that children's individual mental creativity must be induced by the educative processes of portraying children as agents themselves, but insists that it is both the cognitive and the emotional sides of the child's life which must be treated with respect.

Immanuel Kant, basing his thoughts on Enlightenment philosophy, places focus on the powers of human reason as leading to independent and critical thinking. Kant's views are rooted in *autonomy* and *freedom* in which autonomy implies the freedom of will from the objects of willing. Man has the potential of controlling his natural impulses through reflection. He proposes that since the child is still immature, he needs education to nurture, control and adjust his impulses. However, Kant (1992) emphasises that "if education is to develop human nature so that it may attain the object of its being, it must involve the exercise of judgment" (p.13). He suggests that the child, at an early age, should be granted freedom, albeit to an extent that he neither hurts himself nor infringes on others' freedom. In addition, Kant's philosophy of the child's education is linked to his moral philosophy as he stressed that through his own reason, through reflectivity, the child is able to control his impulses and in the process should be able to respect the rights of others. Kant's moral theory contributes to the recognition that children can do philosophy by recognising that the child has the capacity, through education, to respect the 'otherness of the other'. However, he warns us that, "A child should be clever but only as a child. He should not ape the manners of his elders... he ought to have merely the understanding of a child and not to display it too early" (ibid. p.93). Kant's makes a contribution to the understanding of how, through autonomy linked to freedom, the child learns to think on his own and learns to philosophise. Hans-Joachim Werner recognises Kant's contribution to our understanding of the conception of Philosophy for Children by noting that "...the academic discipline philosophy can be helpful in defining what we mean by philosophising with children: it leads to the fundamental questions of human

existence⁹, in the Kantian sense, and deals with the themes that have been argued in great philosophical texts” (Werner, 2009, p. 17).

An early 20th-century German Neo-Kantian philosopher, Leonard Nelson, reiterates the Socratic Method by emphasising that philosophy is not about the teaching of ideas of philosophers in the past. Rather, he says, it is the art of making students philosophers by engaging them in the exercise of thinking for themselves, to exercise their individual ability to abstract. Nelson’s assumptions are that it is by strictly pursuing the conventions of the dialogic enterprise that participants gain knowledge of their own internal experience with no reference to philosophers in history. It is his submission that such a dialogue is steered by a facilitator without imposing himself on the subject matter of inquiry. To that end, he concludes that:

If the end of education is rational self-determination, i.e. a condition in which the individual does not allow his behaviour to be determined by outside influence but judges and acts according to his own insight, the question then arises: How can we affect a person by outside influences so that he will not be affected by outside influences? We must resolve this paradox or abandon the task of education (Nelson, 1949, pp. 18-19).

Nelson’s position is that teaching philosophy is not about suggesting answers but about learning a procedure of arriving at them. In a closely related vein, Ryle (1967) asks: “How can one person teach another person to think things out for himself, since if he gives him, say, the new arithmetical thoughts, then

⁹ In the Kantian sense, all our knowledge begins with the senses, proceeds then to the understanding, and ends with reason. There is nothing higher than reason. All the interests of my reason, speculative as well as practical, combine in the three following questions: 1. What can I know? 2. What ought I to do? 3. What may I hope for and what is human existence? (Kant, 2008, p. 172).

they are not the pupil's own thoughts; or, if they are his own thoughts, then he did not get them from his teacher?"(p. 112). All this pertains to teaching the activity of philosophising. Nelson is stressing teaching philosophy from a pedagogical viewpoint by pointing out that doing philosophy should help children to realise that they are fallible and hence they did not know what they did not know. So what is the place of the individual in the activity of philosophising?

5.3 Philosophy and the individual

In Danish philosopher Soren Kierkegaard's writing we can also find the links between childhood and philosophy. Against his teacher Hegel, Kierkegaard argues against absolutism by suggesting that it kills individual thinking and he stressed the significance of the subjective in the activity of thinking. In line with Montaigne, he acknowledges that childhood is a phase adults have abandoned. He perceives childhood as an earlier stage in human life providing grounding for future life phases. He is against parental restrictions, especially repeatedly reading unengaging stories, which prevents children to question and think critically. For this reason, he advises that we must live openly and freely with children and philosophise with them when unexpected moments present themselves, which should not be planned beforehand. In the strict sense of formal schooling, it is impossible to philosophise with children. But, from the progressivist point of view, schooling can take place in an environment in which both students and teachers are learners with both parties engaging each other in an open and dialogical encounter.

John Dewey, an American pragmatist philosopher of the early 20th century, according to Lipman, greatly influenced the view that individual experience is central in the enterprise of education. Dewey's philosophy of education is a "lived experience" philosophy and it is also shared experience, which implies that an individual experiences learning with others, and learning with others is experiencing with others. His contribution to Philosophy for Children is also

recognisable in his proposition that the learning process requires communication in the sharing of ideas. To him, dialogue then becomes the vehicle by which this transformation of growth and development takes place. It is by sharing ideas through authentic dialogue among the participants that growth in the learning process comes to fruition. Dewey's central concept of education places emphasis on widening intellect and the enlargement of problem-solving and critical thinking skills.

Dewey enunciates in his book, *How We Think* (1910/1933), his concept of how human beings think and identified several modes of thought, including belief, imagination and stream of consciousness, but the mode he was most interested in was reflection (Rogers, 2002). He four criteria that characterise reflective thinking. First, reflection is a meaning-making activity (Dewey, 1944) that moves the learner from one experience into the next with deeper appreciation of its links with and connections to other experiences and ideas. Second, it is a systematic, rigorous and disciplined way of thinking. Third, reflection needs to happen in community, in interaction with others. One needs to express oneself to others so that others truly understand one's ideas. Interaction is an important constituent of experience and, by sharing, one's experiential field is widened, since "...we are partners in common undertakings, the things which others communicate to us as the consequence of their particular share in the enterprise blend at once into the experience from our own special doing" (Dewey, 1944, p. 186). Fourth, reflection requires attitudes that value the personal growth of one's self and of others. For Dewey to speak of reflection in a community without acknowledging the dispositions necessary for the reflective action is a misnomer. This leads to his fourth criterion, that is, reflection as a set of attitudes. He mentions open-mindedness, genuineness as self-absorption, forgetting oneself in order to be self-aware, wholeheartedness and responsibility as the guiding instruments for reflective thinking. In the main, education for Dewey (1944) should aim at intellectual, moral and emotional growth of the individual. He stressed that its success is measured by "...the extent to which the interests of a group are shared by all its members... the fullness and freedom with which it interacts with other

groups, and the extent to which it makes provision for participation in its good of all its members on equal terms..." (p. 99).

Dewey's philosophy of education presents a watershed for doing philosophy with children by leading us to an understanding of educative experiences as comprising reflective thinking by the individual participating in a community through interaction with their environment. The value of a dialogical experience of individuals in community leading to their gaining of knowledge in order to solve practical problems of their world, according to Dewey, is the focus of engaging children in the activity of learning. His thrust of reflective action as the whole process of thinking provides us with a guide as to what all educational experiences should be. Embedded in the educational philosophy of Dewey is the assertion that children will think freely and creatively about the subject at hand, provided they are given proper educational conditions. Such conditions need to be challenging and provocative to children's minds. Hence, Dewey provides us with a firm foundation of the link between philosophy, education and social life. Hence he writes:

Education offers a vantage ground from which to penetrate to the human, as distinct from the technical, significance of philosophic discussions... The educational point of view enables one to envisage the philosophic problems where they arise and thrive, where they are at home, and where acceptance or rejection makes a difference in practice (Dewey, 1966, p. 482)

This goes to explain his position that "philosophy may even be defined as the general theory of education" or "philosophy is the theory of education as deliberately conducted practice" (ibid .p.338). He concludes that "...the reconstruction of philosophy, of education, and of social ideals and methods... go hand in hand" (p. 341). Philosophy, including Philosophy for Children, must concern itself with the human problems, not with the problems of philosophy. It should draw on people's lived experiences (including those of children) with stories, songs and folklore in the children's mother tongue informing the

philosophical education of the child's cultural universe. Kennedy concludes that Dewey is:

... a prophet of the emerging model... (of) the educational theory and practice of philosophy for children... since Dewey's thought is foundational to... the curriculum, certainly to the pedagogy and educational politics of philosophy for children. The methodology of philosophy for children can be understood as both a fulfilment of Dewey's educational vision and, in the process, a correction or reinterpretation of how that vision might be realised (Kennedy, 1995 -b, p. 162).

He adds that "...the element of adult-child dialogue – latent in the Romantic, anarchist and progressive visions – was first suggested in the education theory of Dewey in *The Child and the Curriculum* and *My Pedagogic Creed*, and then articulated clearly in the work of Paulo Freire (1993). The very possibility of adult-child dialogue implies another philosophy of childhood... a philosophy... of adult-child relation" (Kennedy, 2009, p. 48).

Bertrand Russell has a major impact on modern philosophy, especially in the English-speaking world. Russell's conception of critical thinking is of relevance to doing philosophy. For him, critical thinking involves reference to a variety of skills, dispositions and attitudes, typifying a virtue which serves to repudiate the surfacing of numerous vices, among them, dogmatism and prejudice. He holds that one of the pivotal purposes of education is to prepare students to be able to form "a reasonable judgment on controversial questions in regard to which they are likely to have to act..., (and therefore)... education needs to offer training in judicial habits of thought" (Russell, 1956, p. 131). He stresses children's need to develop some skills if the knowledge obtained is not to yield passive individuals who merely recognise the teacher's knowledge or the dominant doctrines offered by their society. Among the critical skills Russell proposes are "1) "...the ability to form an opinion for oneself..." (Russell, 1939, p. 530) 2) "...the ability to find an impartial solution..." (Russell, 1956, p. 174) and 3) "...the ability to identify and question assumptions..." (Russell, 1927, p. 299). Russell portrays education

as the development of the certain intellectual habits — more specifically the habit of open-minded inquiry; the habit of reflect on evidence, the habit of attempting to see things truly, as opposed to merely accepting the prevailing bias; and the habit of living from one's own centre, a form of self-direction, and some freedom of one's desires. As will be discussed in the next two chapters, the habits and dispositions Russell proposes for the education of children inform the foundation of the activity of doing philosophy with children.

5.4 Summary and Critique

What has been discussed above are the landmarks that directed the emergence and (re)construction of philosophy especially with children as young members of the human species. The above historic-philosophical overview of engaging children in philosophy at an early age provides evidence for the Platonic and ancient Greek position that philosophy is not an elite discipline but an activity that all can be involved in. This “process” view of philosophy as explored in Chapter 1, that is, philosophising as an act that all can engage in, has also encompassed children. Kierkegaard and Jaspers hold that childhood is a valuable phase of life in itself, and doing philosophy with children allows the children's voice to be heard. The picture portrayed of the relevance of philosophy to children is not just a consequence of the conception of philosophy by philosophers but also shows a need for a redefinition of education. Ancient and medieval thinkers did not doubt children's capacity to assimilate, master and study the intellectual skills and engage in cognitive acts but rather denied the latter's potential to reflect, assess and evaluate the content material. With the progress of time and the changing conception of philosophy, together with the changing conception of childhood, the ground was prepared for a (re)vision of the prevailing conception of education. The acceptance that children have the propensity to curiosity and wonder, and are concerned with truth and meaning, led to the understanding that children in the elementary school can do philosophy.

I see the above child-centred pedagogy of modernity as generating some challenges. Traditionalists will contest the romanticisation of philosophy as the loss of the basic image of the aim of education. Kant argues that the Socratic Method of doing philosophy provides the purpose of the child's luminal subjectivity towards the formation of the rational, autonomous citizen. This shows how the subjective/objective dualism, adult/child relationship has caused what is often referred to as the pedagogical paradox, especially manifested in the general constitution of the pedagogical interaction of the modern era. In the Lockean view education is something happening between persons to construct and impose objectives in the individual in order to influence the other's mind to form habits. This makes the educator a master of the tabula rasa under his charge (Oelkers, 1994). On the other hand, the idea of educating the nature of the child as represented by Rousseau's *Emile* stands for the developmental perspective with an emphasis on pedagogical reflection. It is through the contributions of some astute and sharp-witted thinkers and educationalist-scholars that philosophy has located for itself a respected place in schools, especially in the regions mentioned earlier. I find the thoughts and ideas of the precursors to educational theory and practice making significant contributions to the improvement and transformation of pedagogy, including the so-called basic skills such as reading and writing. Philosophical education, whether of the child or adult, and whether conducted through instruction or communal inquiry, is defended on the promise of its formative potential for a better world (Gregory, 2011). The justification provided in the history of education as shown by a few scholars above point out the foundations of Philosophy for Children in the 21st century. The questions that I will address in the forthcoming chapters will, among others, include:

- Does philosophy for children belong to schools at all?
- What is the philosophy of childhood?
- What is the role of the community of inquiry in Philosophy for Children?
- Why Philosophy for Children?

If we admit that philosophy is not reserved for adults and that children need it, can understand it, and profit from it, then there is justification for finding a methodology suitable for its implementation. But two questions emerge: 1) What is the content of Philosophy for Children; and 2) Is there a distinct methodology of doing philosophy with children, separate from that of other disciplines in the curriculum? These are the focus of concern in Chapters 6 and 7, respectively. I will give an exposé of how Philosophy for Children as a programme came into being by looking at Matthew Lipman's proposal in the next chapter.

Chapter 6: What is Philosophy for Children?

6.1 Introduction

Globally there have been rapid socioeconomic changes and these have propelled a need to reconsider conventional values and therefore the educational values fostered in schools. Education systems are facing challenges to reshape the cognitive skills, interpersonal awareness and cultural sensibilities of children as learners to suit the changing times. Educators worldwide have argued that one of the central skills for survival in an ever-changing world is the skill to think critically and creatively, and that the foundations of an education system should be tailored to accommodate this imperative (Halpern, 2003; Paul, 1995; Scheffler, 1989). The 21st-century global life demands from its citizens “...the capacity for, and skills in, analysis and problem-solving and the ability to communicate ideas and information, to plan and organise activities and to collaborate with others; the capacity to exercise judiciousness and accountability in matters of morality, ethics and social justice (Mellor & Corrigan, 2004, p. 8) What then are the implications for the child?

There has been growing interest in recognising the place of the child through an assortment of legal instruments related to the protection of children’s rights, especially targeted at the development of personal views. For instance, the United Nations Convention on the Right of the Children (UNCRC) (1989), among others, stresses the child’s “...right to express [his or her] views freely (Article 12), ...right to freedom of expression[...] to seek, to receive and impart information and ideas

of all kinds (Article 13) and to “freedom of thought” (Article 14)¹⁰. The questions that arise are: How are we to educate adults of tomorrow; how can educational aims be adjusted to suit the child in 21st century Africa; and what basic skills and competencies as well as attitudes does the child need to survive in and contribute to a changing world? These questions invite a further philosophical and pedagogical question: What procedures in this regard result in an educationally valuable achievement?

In response to the above, Lipman proposes the introduction of philosophy in schools at an early age to develop children into critical, creative and caring adult thinkers. For him, philosophy is the only means which can initiate the procedure of self-critical inquiry. Hence, Lipman (2003) declares:

If the schools could do more than teach children to exercise better judgment, it would protect them against those who would inflame them with prejudice and manipulate them through indoctrination. It would make them better producers and consumers, better citizens and better parents (p. 273).

Lipman’s grand Philosophy for Children programme is to interrogate the traditional forms of school education and focuses on thinking, judgment and reasonableness in education. In effect, Lipman proposed the programme as an initiative “...devoted to exploring the relationship between the notions of ‘philosophy’ and ‘childhood’” (Vansieleghem & Kennedy, 2011, p. 171). But, does this initiative not sound rather problematic in terms of pedagogical action? Some might question: Can we teach children philosophy? If so, will philosophy maintain its meaning as it has known for centuries? The present chapter analyses the theory behind Lipman’s Philosophy for Children programme with the aim to identify the main philosophical and pedagogical foundations of Philosophy for

¹⁰ See Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)
<http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu2/6/crc/treaties/crc.htm>.

Children rooted in American pragmatism, and to locate their pedagogisation and possible problems in Lipman's thinking¹¹. To do the aforementioned, I will examine briefly the historical background of Philosophy for Children as a programme. The chapter will also attempt, in line with the Lipmanian view¹², a justification for engaging children in philosophical thinking. I will wind up the chapter with a critique of Philosophy for Children by comparing and contrasting the Lipmanian model with other versions of doing philosophy with children. It is hoped that this will yield a more comprehensive understanding of the notion of Philosophy for Children.

6.2 Background of Philosophy for Children

Philosophy for Children is a fairly recent educational development and the brainchild of Lipman, designed to encourage philosophising by children, starting at an early age. Lipman, in the late 1960s, then Professor of Logic at Columbia University, came to the conclusion that there is a need for a philosophical curriculum that would help young people to improve their thinking skills in a multifaceted fashion. For Lipman, the idea of doing philosophy with children did not just emerge as a sudden "out of the blue" experience but rather matured gradually from a mixture of a variety of ingredients¹³. In fact, he writes:

¹¹ Lipman himself identifies John Dewey and George H. Mead, as well as Lev Vygotsky, as the most central foundation for his own thinking.

¹² I have confined my study to Lipman's approach to Philosophy for Children although I am aware of initiatives elsewhere around the globe of implementing alternate community of philosophical inquiry approaches, on many occasions successfully so. This has been done deliberately, in an effort to analyse only one approach, especially since Lipman's is the source proposal for such initiatives as Philosophy *with* Children, Philosophy *in* Schools, Community of philosophical inquiry in the classroom etc. – and considering the time and space allocated to my study.

¹³ Lipman describes the initial steps of his proposal in some of his writings, including *Studies in Philosophy for Children: Harry Stottlemeier's Discovery* (1992), *Thinking in Education* (Cannon) and some like materials are found in recent interviews with Naji (2005) and De Puig and Gomez (2002).

I began to think that the problem I was seeing at university could not be solved there, that thinking was something that had to be taught much earlier, before thinking habits become entrenched so that by the time a student graduates from high school, skilful, independent thinking would have become a habit (Lipman in Fisher, 1998, p. 26).

The movement began when Matthew Lipman in 1974 published the first of several philosophical novels for children and established the Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children (IAPC) at Montclair State University in New Jersey. He then wrote a book “...for and about children that would include ideas from philosophy... (*but would avoid*) the formidable terminology and academic writing style of that field” (Hagaman, 1990, p. 151). This makes the programme unique, especially in that the created novels are used to expose students to a variety of philosophical questions and ideas, as well as to get them interested in thinking philosophically. In addition, the novels include “characters in a dialogical inquiry with regard to the philosophical puzzlement they find themselves encountering in experience” (Sharp, 1995, p. 47). Lipman’s novels mark a new genre of the philosophical novel for children with the purpose to construct a pedagogical tool, “...a model for critical thinking ... describing ‘real life’ children engaged in critical dialogue about philosophical issues” (Vansieleghem & Kennedy, 2011, p. 173)

As shown in Chapter 5, Lipman attributes his idea of using philosophy for nurturing thinking in children by referring to his acquaintance with John Dewey who subsequently introduced him to the founder of pragmatism, Charles S. Peirce, as well as to George Herbert Mead’s educational thoughts. He claims he was particularly impressed by Dewey’s “practicality”. Other philosophers, like Justus Buchler’s studies, stirred his understanding of the nature of judgement as well as his understanding of the place of judgement in education (Lipman & Naji, 2003a), while Mead is said to have woken in him an interest in the relationship between thinking and the sociocultural context. Lev Vygotsky’s (1896-1934) *Thought and*

Speech (1931)¹⁴ also stirred Lipman's intellectual thought. He also familiarised himself with Jean Piaget, whose work acquainted him with the relationships between thinking and behaviour. Given this background, despite showing no interest in education prior to the 1960s, Lipman (2009) says, "I fell in love with it, just as earlier on while I was still in the military service in World War II, I had fallen in love with philosophy" (p. 24). Lipman was concerned that schools were failing to teach students to think and this inspired him to create such a programme. In fact, he asks, " Why is it that while children of four, five and six are full of curiosity, creativity and interest and never stop asking for further explanations , by the time they are eighteen they are passive, uncritical and bored with learning?" (Lipman, 1982, p. 37). Lipman and his associates identify five broad features of the standard paradigm of education, which they criticise by observing that:

- Education consists in the transmission of knowledge from those who know to those who don't know
- Knowledge is about the world and our knowledge of the world is unambiguous, unequivocal and unmysterious
- Knowledge is distributed among disciplines that are non-overlapping and, together, are exhaustive of the world as it is to be known
- The teacher plays an authoritative role in the educational process, for only if teachers know can students learn what they know
- Students acquire knowledge by absorption, i.e. data about specifics; an educated mind is a well-stocked mind (*Adapted from Lipman et al 1980, p.14*).

On the basis of the above Lipman suggests that traditional educational practices fail to "produce people approximating the ideal of reasonableness" (Lipman, 1988, p. 18), and points out that human beings in past centuries could afford the luxury

¹⁴ In the article, *The Vygotsky Touch* (Lipman and Pizzurro, 2001), Lipman acknowledges the influence of Vygotsky.

of unreasonableness, the costs of which, to him, are too high in contemporary times. He charges that the information-acquisition model dominating the system of education is not promising people to think for themselves as it stifles rather than initiate thinking in the learner. In effect, Lipman holds that “It was not enough to teach merely for more up-to-date factual knowledge, just as it was not enough to teach just for reasoning or for truth” (Lipman & Naji, 2003b)¹⁵. In addition, he criticised current textbooks for being didactic devices that stand against the child as an alien and rigid other. In effect, the school essentially becomes a coercive experience characterised by a rule-orientation, absolutism and hierarchical structure, with teachers charged with responsibilities of ensuring enforcement of rules. He posits that there is a serious vacuum in the elementary school curriculum with little being done to teach children about the important areas of ethics and logic, and, hence, nothing introduces children to the nature and process of their own thinking. Although there are efforts to teach him to think about the disciplines of science, maths and history, among other things, Lipman adds that little effort is made to make children to think with others. There is , as Lone (2000) explains, “... an almost complete lack of genuine trust in children” and as a result of this, there is a direct “outgrowth of the passive learning approach demanded of children by schools” (p. 152). In Lipman’s (1993) words:

What the school does succeed in introducing into the child is... a distrust of any intellectual powers of his own other than what it takes to cope with problems formulated and assigned to him by others... the child distrusts not only his intellectual capacities, but those of his classmates as well (pp. 376-377).

Thus, for Lipman, traditional educational model described above is the home of meaninglessness.

¹⁵ Lipman, in an interview with S. Naji (2003), contrasts two paradigms of education, the traditional one and the reflective one. (Available on: <http://www.buf.no/en/read/txt/index.php?page=sn-lip2>).

Lipman also suggests that the most efficient and effective way of examining thinking and valuing is to use the philosophical instruments of logic and ethics and that a fairly early age is the appropriate and desirable stage at which philosophical thinking can be encouraged and developed among children in a systematic manner. In effect, the Philosophy for Children programme is a curriculum specifically designed to introduce philosophy to primary and secondary school learners in an interesting, meaningful and stimulating way. This is based on the view that anyone can do philosophy, including children, as contrasted to the expert view that subscribes to the thesis that a certain preparation is necessary, especially for the young before they can be allowed to trespass into philosophy's territory. The question then is, who should be the gatekeepers for philosophy to determine who is able to enter into the domain of philosophy and who is not? Certainly it should be the philosophers – just as historians and the scientists, for example, determine and facilitate access to the domains of their expertise.

6.3 Why philosophical thinking for children?

The promotion of intellectual development has been the focus of educational processes since the last part of the 20th century, with emphasis on critical thinking as the goal of education.¹⁶ But, why focus on thinking? The basic idea is that everyone thinks, as Lipman et al (1980) puts it. Like breathing and digesting it is “a natural process – something everyone does” (Lipman, Sharp, & Oscanyan, 1980, p. 14). This might suggest there can be nothing that can be done to improve thinking as this is innate in us, just as we may not improve on breathing and digestion, but Lipman is of the view that despite its naturalness, thinking is capable of being refined and perfected. He maintains that children have both the eagerness and the capability to engage in philosophical thinking. He concludes that, “Youngsters and philosophy are natural allies for both begin in wonder” (Lipman, 1984, p.5). Without promoting himself as the only protagonist advancing

¹⁶ See Fisher's *Teaching Children to Think* (1995) where he explores the various approaches to teaching thinking.

the relationship between philosophy and children, Lipman explains a historical parallel of Philosophy for Children and the origin of Western philosophical ideas by contending that:

What happened in the sixth century B.C. is that thinking turned round on itself; people began to think about thinking, and that momentous event, the culmination of the long process... (*in fact marked*)... the birth of philosophy... what the early Greeks recognised is much the same as what many teachers and administrators are beginning to realise today: just as the perfection of the thinking process culminates in philosophy, so too is philosophy par excellence, the finest instrument yet devised for the perfection of the thinking process (Lipman et al., 1980, p. xi).

In addition, Lipman demystifies the widely held view that philosophy is an ivory-tower discipline. He proposes to bring it down to suit the level of all, including children, by referring to the sixth-century aphorisms that were simple and popularly accessible. However, it is important to observe that Lipman did not recommend that by making philosophy simple to suit the level of children it should lose its rigour. Rather, Lipman et al emphasise another Socratic trait, which emphasises philosophy as hard work:

Whatever Socrates urges us to do; he shows us how to do. Thinking is work, and it is a kind of work no one can do for anyone else... Nothing about Socrates is so contagious as the calm confidence he exudes, that those to whom he talks are as capable of thinking – and of thinking excellently – as he is (Lipman et al., 1980, p. xiii).

Lipman's view of philosophising as hard work, or conversely, the part played by the individual in the activity of philosophising, that is, thinking for oneself is quite clear. But, what exactly is "thinking for oneself"? According to Kennedy (1999b),

it is “...usually associated with the eighteenth-century Enlightenment¹⁷ – the problematisation of collectively held beliefs, scepticism, and individualism” (p.40). One who thinks for oneself only respects and obeys one’s own understanding, that is, accepts what makes good sense to oneself. Such a cognitive disposition understands an individual as an isolated being, thereby locked up in excessive individualism. However, another side of thinking for oneself involves using one’s cognitive powers to solve challenges one meets in one’s life-world without depending on the other for solutions. To understand Lipman’s position on thinking for oneself, Kant’s second maxim helps in considering thinking from the standpoint of everyone else. As Mead (1934) puts it, “Every individual self within a given society... reflects (*thinks deeply*) in its organised structure... the individual is continually reacting back against this society. Every adjustment involves some change in the community to which the individual adjusts himself” (p.202). This implies, in sum, that any community of persons is an “inter-subjective location where the individual and the communal, the self and the other, thinking for oneself and thinking with others, are possible” (Kennedy, 1999b, p. 44) with opposites and distinctions contributing to the richness of the whole. In this sense, thinking is for oneself but also, and importantly, thinking with others, the self becomes a gift from others¹⁸ (Werner, 2009) where the centre of attention passes from “...the individualistic ‘me’ to the overwhelming ‘other’ and social control comes to substitute individual agency in the thinking process” (Nelson, 1949, p. 271). This will be explored in greater detail as I attend to Ukama (as relationality in a community of inquiry) in doing philosophy with children.

In support of the Lipmanian discourse explored above, Matthews introduces the notion of the child’s voice as opposed to traditional forms of educating that focus

¹⁷ In his *Critique of Judgement*, Kant (1987) provides three “maxims” of “common human understanding”: 1) to think for oneself; 2) to think from the standpoint of everyone else; and 3) to think always consistently (1987, pp.160-161)

¹⁸ This will be explored in detail in Chapter 9.

on the transfer of knowledge from the adults to children. Does a child's question differ from a wondering adult's? Matthews (1984) observes that, "Children can help us adults investigate and reflect on interesting and important questions and... children's contributions may be quite as valuable as any we adults have to offer" (p. 3). In this sense, Matthews equates the child and the adult in balanced relation in terms of thought. Philosophers (adults) and children both question and answer. He does not speak of philosophy *for* or *with* children but instead of "dialogue with children" and proposes that children ask questions similar to those asked by adults though expressed differently. Clearly, Matthews separates "philosophy with children" from "dialogues with children". While it is natural for children to ask philosophical questions, it is problematic to assume that questions asked by children are philosophical. On the general understanding of philosophy as an academic discipline that deals with abstractions that are removed from children's reach and demanding an ability for hard, continuous logical thinking. One ought to take for granted that children can and do philosophise. Jaspers (1978) observes that children's capacity to philosophise depreciates with age:

With the years, we seem to enter into a prison of conventions and opinions, concealments and unquestioned acceptance, and there we lose the candour of childhood. The child still reacts spontaneously to the spontaneity of life; the child feels and sees and inquires into things, which soon disappear from his vision. He forgets what for a moment was revealed to him and is surprised when grownups later tell him what he said and what questions he asked (p.39).

Hence the child needs to be offered opportunities that permit the possibility of philosophical wondering and reasoning native to him or her, repeatedly questioning the meaning of life in which he or she is part of. Philosophy for Children helps children to construct meanings for themselves, rather than simply accept those which are handed down to them.

An equally essential component of thinking, according to Lipman et al (1980), is pedagogical. He observes, "Socrates engages people in conversation... to engage

in dialogue is to explore possibilities, to discover alternatives, to recognise other perspectives, and to establish a community of inquiry” (p. xiv). In support, Fisher argues that “ For Socrates , philosophy was something you do, rather than a set of philosophical truths to be learnt” (Fisher, 1995, p. 25). In this sense, philosophy is an activity and is something you do with others, as opposed to the fixed conception of philosophy as a worldview that embodies commonly held beliefs, doctrines and traditions. Hence, the founders of Philosophy for Children as a programme saw doing philosophy as conversation, dialogue and discussion, and stressed community of inquiry as the appropriate pedagogy. In effect, Lipman (1985) says, in support of Matthews’ philosophy for children as *dialogue with children*:

If some children offer generalisations, others may offer counter-instances; if some voice opinions without reasons, others promptly request adequate reasons. Gradually they come to discover inconsistencies in their own thinking. As time goes on they learn to cooperate by building on one another’s ideas, by questioning each other’s underlying assumptions, by suggesting alternatives when some find themselves blocked and frustrated, and by listening carefully and respectfully to the ways in which other people express how things appear to them (p. 37).

The notion of community in search of meaning will be explored in depth and breadth in Chapter 7.

What form of philosophy does Philosophy for Children seek to introduce to the young? Lipman argues that good thinking is the goal of philosophical thinking with children. Philosophical thinking involves two outstanding objectives:

- 1) To interrogate existing aims, practices and institutions with respect to whether they are furthering the quality of life for all people pointing out values which have become obsolete; and

- 2) To construct new values, new institutions and new relationships that would enable people to flourish, to have better quality of life (Dewey, 1916).

On this view, philosophy's central goal is to better the quality of life of humanity. By the same token, when people begin to think philosophically, they, implicitly or explicitly, begin to transform their own lives and the lives of those with whom they philosophise. I agree with Fisher's (1998) assertion that "...the quality of our lives and our learning depends on the quality of our thinking" (p. 6). Conversely, there is a frequently advanced view that thinking is an intrinsic value for human development, and therefore every individual has the right to have their intellect developed (Machado, 1984; Siegel, 1991). On the contrary, "poor thinking" may take the form of a failure to draw pertinent conclusions, of reflecting on alleged facts or assumptions uncritically or of defining and classifying erroneously. Most of us, young and old, at any one time are prone to think poorly. Hence, Lipman proposes that humans (including children), if offered opportunities that teach them to exercise better judgement, would stand against those who, through indoctrination, may manipulate them (Lipman, 2003). The question that comes to mind is: When do the children start to think and, more precisely, to think philosophically? Lipman (1980) responds by proposing, "when they begin to ask why" (p. 58) and so the question of "why" can be considered as a form of children's engagement in philosophical behaviour at an early age. The child gets involved in persistent questioning, thereby displaying eagerness and curiosity to know. If philosophy is a way of life, and a continuous belief in the puzzling nature of human life, then whether adult or child, "we are all truth-seeking human beings" (Osholt, 2001, n.p.).

Education should function as the vehicle for teaching children to think critically, creatively and caringly, as will be elaborated in later parts of this chapter. If Philosophy for Children is a thinking skills programme, then it can be set "...not to turn children into philosophers or decision makers, but to help them to become more thoughtful, more reflective, more moderate and more reasonable

individuals” (Lipman et al., 1980, p. 15). Besides, thinking must be of pragmatic value for the individuals and society alike to progress. If children learn to be judicious in their thinking, they can make better practical decisions in meeting life challenges. As Dewey (1916) puts it, “...thinking is rather equivalent to an explicit rendering of the intelligent element of our experience. It makes it possible to act with an end in view. It is our condition of having aims” (p. 146). Dewey shows how thinking makes action a meaningful experience if it makes us think about something; if it introduces us to new things.

Fisher (1990) argues, teaching for better thinking is not only “a moral but a rational enterprise” as this leads to the development of attitudes and dispositions. These include “the disposition to inquire, the attitude of commitment to inquiry” (p. 10). Thinking also has a social side in that it involves respecting oneself as well as respecting others with whom one interacts. In other words, being a person means having a sense of oneself, including oneself as a thinker and a learner, and a sense of others through the interaction we have with them. As we search for the truth, we need to be honest and respect others by taking care of our position and the positions of others honestly. It is by attentive listening to others, avoiding intimidation of others and showing concern for others that we can be said to be caring about the dignity and worth of every person – that is, respecting others. Despite the popular assumption “...that thinking is private and internal” (Lipman et al., 1980, p. 22), there is a relationship between thinking and thinking with others (dialogical thinking) and often we tend to be obliged to reflect, to concentrate and to respect alternative choices, attend to definitions and meanings and recognise previously unthought-of options each time we are engaged in a dialogue with the other. Thus, dialogical thinking serves the function of not only allowing the individual to respond in our minds to the expression of others but we also are internalising the dialogue and replicating the thoughts we experience from the expressions of the parties to the dialogue.

A look at the Western philosophical tradition reveals that “the foundations of philosophy are rooted in ‘good thinking’” (Daniel & Auriac, 2011, p. 2)¹⁹. Socrates’ ironic questioning also demonstrates his conception of knowledge. For him, knowledge is not something to be transmitted by the knowing adult but rather is a product of the individual’s spirited questioning through interaction with others. Osholt (2001, n.p) argues that the child is “...a virtual gold mine of fundamental questions, philosophical wonderment and innocent originality... (and) is potentially philosophical... [E]very child is meant from the beginning to participate in philosophical dialogue”²⁰. Although Socrates did not teach philosophy, he taught the young how to philosophise – a method of learning to reflect. Philosophy turned out to be self- knowledge and an intellectual pursuit for the meaning of being, made possible through interaction with the “other”, as well as through the mental rigour imposed by questioning. Sprod argues that good thinking is holistic, and being a good thinker is more than being good at a number of individual thinking skills (Sprod, 1995.). In this regard, Lipman describes thinking as “multi-dimensional thinking” (Lipman, 2003); thinking that is creative, caring and critical, which I will describe in a little more detail below.

Just like the definition of philosophy, there is no universal consensus on a definition of critical thinking among educators, philosophers and psychologists in the field, hence current literature on critical thinking gives credibility to the view that the term has as many definitions as there are experts in the field (Benderson, 1990). Dewey (1938) advocates the cause of critical thinking in education as early as the first half of the 20th century. He perceives it as reflective thinking:

...active, persistent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further

¹⁹ This includes examples of philosophers like Thales, Heraclitus and Anaxagoras, who conceived philosophy as a reflexive process — i.e. as thinking about thinking.

²⁰ See www.buf.no/en/read/text?page=01-en

conclusions to which it tends... [It] includes conscious and voluntary effort to establish belief upon firm basis of evidence and rationality (p.9).

Paul (1995) further elaborates on the concept by asserting that critical thinking is about “...thinking about your thinking while you’re thinking to make your thinking better” (p. 91) and adds that it is:

...a unique kind of purposeful thinking in which the thinker systematically and habitually imposes criteria and intellectual standards upon the thinking, taking charge of the construction of thinking, guiding the construction of the thinking according to the standards, assessing the effectiveness of the thinking according to the purpose, the criteria, and the standards. (p. 21)

For Lipman, individuals need *critical thinking* so that they are able to distinguish from among all the received information and select the most relevant, according to the objectives they pursue. Thus, critical thinking revolves around three criteria: 1) the use of particular criteria (to evaluate the terms or statements); 2) self-correction (to engage in an active search for one’s own mistakes); and 3) sensitivity to context (the ability to recognise how different contexts require unique applications of rules and principles) (Lipman, 1988a; Lipman, 1995). In effect, Lipman defines critical thinking as “...thinking which leads to the making of judgements through the reliance upon criteria... thinking that leads to the making of judgements is practical thinking” (Lipman, 1998, p.683). But, for him all judgements are products of skilfully selected actions guided by criteria, since criteria “...are among the most valuable instruments of rational procedure” (Lipman, 1988a, p. 89). To separate good thinking from poor thinking, some of the criteria used could “...include validity, consistency, coherence, reliability, relevance, acceptability and sufficiency” (ibid). In addition, critical thinking is self-corrective in that its investigative character leads to further inquiry as it searches for its mistakes, its shortcomings, its defects and inconsistencies. Critical thinking is thus reflective in nature as it considers the reasons, assumptions, evidence and personal perspective and viewpoint. As Lipman (1988) puts it:

Reflective thinking is thinking that is aware of its own assumptions and implications as well as being conscious of the reasons and evidence that support this or that conclusion. It takes into account its own methodology, its own procedures, its own perspective and point of view (p. 26).

Critical thinking is the process of carefully examining our own thinking and that of others to clarify and improve our understanding of the world, and it is often associated with applying rules of analysis. Such a conception of thinking is philosophical in that it presupposes that teaching for critical thinking will stimulate doubts, questions and self-correction in children to improve their personal and social experience (Dewey, 1983; Paul, 1990, 1992). Critical thinking is inter-subjective in that it implies an open dialogue within a community of peers and a dialectical relationship between reflection and action. Critical thinking²¹ is a *praxis* on which Lipman founded his Philosophy for Children. On this understanding of philosophical thinking, Philosophy for Children consists in initiating children to engage in or practise philosophy through critical thinking, not in teaching them about a body of abstract knowledge. Instead, “...philosophy is something one does” (Gazzard, 1996, p. 13).

Lipman also connects *creative thinking* to action by pointing out that if our experiences are without imagination they tend to remain boring and, if experience has no imagination, it becomes vacuous and therefore irrelevant. It is by the

²¹ Many thinkers, researchers and ministries of education have asserted that learning critical thinking is a fundamental right (Curley, 1993; Letwin, 1993). Ideally, critical thinking: 1) gives young people the freedom to doubt, ask questions and express themselves, and it instils in them an intellectual rigour (Desbiens, 1999); 2) it encourages the understanding and stability of learning (Peters, Smith, & Smith, 2002); 3) when applied to oneself, it enables each individual to learn to know himself/herself and to exercise metacognitive control to improve his/her individual experience (Ministry of Education of British Columbia, 2000; Ministry of Education of Quebec, 2001); and 4) it enables the student to better integrate socially, make enlightened moral decisions (Darling, 2002; Thomas, 2001) and it energizes democracies (Paul, 1993; Strawson, 1974).

creative aspect of thinking that a person takes ownership of ideas and is able to see links between parts and whole, and to imagine new possibilities²².

The central feature of creative thinking is the ability to think for oneself and thinking for oneself implies the transformation of the given into something unique and different from the originally agreed upon. Thus, to think creatively is to develop ideas that are unique or novel, useful and worthy of further elaboration. We need to use our imagination for “...seeing things from perspectives other than our own and envisioning the likely consequences of our position” (Barnet & Bedau, 1999, p. 4). Creativity presupposes skills such as inventing, associating, suggesting alternatives, making analogies and formulating hypotheses (Daniel & Auriac, 2011).

The *caring* dimension of thinking can also take the form of attending to the way we think, thereby giving due respect to the procedures and is a process of our thinking that is constantly self-corrective. Thinking is related to human emotions, which on a number of occasions direct our thoughts and actions. As Lipman (2003) argues, “We fail to see how profound our emotions shape and direct our thoughts, provide them with framework, with sense of proportion, with a perspective, or better still, with a number of different perspectives” (p.262). Caring thinking is affective and therefore a way of rationalising our impulses by being conscious of our emotions and knowing how to deal with them in a rational manner.

Philosophical thinking is multidimensional in that it is not only critical of the given, but also creates new forms of knowing by challenging the status quo and is caring in that it is conscious of the thinking itself, and therefore self-corrective, by “...seeing things from perspectives other than our own and envisioning the likely consequences of our position” (Barnet & Bedau, 1999, p. 4). In effect, philosophical thinking is about better thinking through thinking about thinking. It

²² Also see Betrand Russell(1998)

is reflective in character and, in the final analysis, creative, caring, and creative thinking is an integral and essential element of good thinking. What then is the link between philosophy, thinking and children?

6.4 Philosophy, Thinking and Children

The generic definition of philosophy as discussed in earlier chapters focuses on philosophy as the “love of wisdom” — a quest for meaning. The question then is: Is there any evidence that children have thoughts that fit the definition? Matthews has a case when he argues that:

...the best way is rather to see whether anything that children say or ask is similar to what some philosopher has once said or asked... it is not unusual for a young child to ask how we know that we are not dreaming. Notoriously, this is an important question philosophical question that Descartes asked (Matthews & Naji, n.d.)²³.

Lipman and Bosch (1997) emphasise that philosophical thinking consists of “...trying to think reasonably about certain concepts that philosophers have always discussed, the nature of which is very general” (p. 1). The Philosophy for Children approach is essentially rooted in the notion that “there are ways of engaging children in philosophical activities long before they are competent to read anything in the traditional philosophical repertoire” (Lipman & Sharp, 1978c, p. 86). But, is philosophy appropriate for all children? Lipman provides an affirmative answer:

Any child that is capable of using language intelligibly is capable of schooling and growth, and is therefore capable of the kind of discourse and conversation that philosophy involves... the aim is not to make

²³ See <http://www.p4c.ir/index/e-ver/interviews.html>.

children into little philosophers, but to think better than they now think (Lipman & Naji, 2003a).²⁴

Learning starts with a sense of wonder and questioning (Lipman 1980) and it is this quality in children, which, when cultivated and encouraged, makes doing philosophy with children one of the most effective means for developing critical thinking skills founded on philosophical inquiry with others. However, I suggest that if the view that children's learning begins with a sense of wonder and questioning is true, then their cultural beliefs play a significant role in the foundation of their thinking skills. Children's curiosity is influenced by their particular functional learning system. It is an oversimplification to assume that the child in traditional Africa, for example, trained to tolerate and accept mysteries and natural phenomena without questioning would develop an eagerness for knowing the details of the myths and the creation of nature. Wilks (1995), for example, wrote:

The premise that children will exhibit curiosity and initiate questions is quite culturally inappropriate for Aboriginal children who are taught to respect the wisdom of the elders and are initiated into adulthood as receptors. In terms of discussion, the place of opinion is largely irrelevant (p. 51).

But, one may ask: Are the children described above not relevant candidates for exposure to situations that engage them in Philosophy for Children activities? This question is left for debate in Chapter 9.

Schertz and Shaughnessy propose that "...over the years children as young as four or five can engage in philosophical dialogue... (*although*) one could easily argue that a two-year-olds' persistent "why?" is a philosophical endeavour (Schertz &

²⁴ See <http://www.buf.no/en/read/txt/index.php?page=sn-lip2>.

Shaughnessy, 2005a)²⁵. Given the history of philosophy which spans for more than 2 500 years, coupled with the impressions embedded in the traditional technical vocabulary, to talk of introducing children to philosophy would sound like a formidable and overwhelming task in the first place. Nevertheless, doing philosophy with children involves concepts that do not belong to a specific subject; concepts that no discipline deals with — for example justice, freedom, truth, love and peace. These are not limited to a particular discipline and therefore guide children to analyse, discuss and argue about them, thereby leading them to think philosophically. For these reasons, protagonists of the Philosophy for Children project are proposing and encouraging that philosophical thinking among children should take place in the terms and concepts that are of daily use to children and with which they are verbally comfortable. For example, Lipman and Sharp (1978c) are of the view that “...Philosophy for Children requires the bypassing of that vocabulary...; (*instead*) philosophical thinking among children should be encouraged to take place in terms and concepts of the ordinary language with which the children are comfortable” (pp.86-87). This has invited criticism, especially with some philosophers arguing that using ordinary language to explore philosophical concepts is tantamount to reducing philosophy to ordinary conversation. Such critics would propose the preservation of the integrity of the tradition of philosophy as a discipline. By contrast, protagonists of the Philosophy for Children school are of the conviction that children need to be encouraged to be more thoughtful and more critical, creative and caring of the subjects they learn in the classroom. They argue that children have to be encouraged to be systematically inquisitive and reflective of the different learning activities they are engaged in. This would presumably also hold for Aboriginal and African children.

Lipman has proposed that better thinking needs to be introduced through the practice of philosophy by entrenching in the young habits of skilful, independent thinking. He locates the role of internalisation of thinking habits in education so

²⁵ See <http://www.ednews.org/articles/an-interview-with-matthew-schertz-about-teaching-children-philosophy-.html>

that the process of education involves making “...thinking rather than knowledge its guiding priority” (Fisher, 1998, p. 27). Lipman’s argument is that if children’s inborn inquisitiveness and their desire to discover the world are incorporated with philosophy, they can become more adaptable and reflective individuals²⁶.

Also unique about the Lipmanian Philosophy for Children programme is the emphasis on *doing* philosophy rather than on the *learning* of philosophy. Lipman and his associates are not interested in helping children learn the history of great philosophers and accuse philosophy of “...being empty if reduced to a memorisation of who said what and when or how one philosophical view compares with another as ends in themselves” (Lipman et al., 1980, p. 83). I find this consonant with Kant’s views concerning the impossibility of teaching philosophy²⁷. Consequently, the names of philosophers are not mentioned in the Philosophy for Children lesson and terms such as metaphysics, epistemology, idealism and realism do not form part of the content of the session. Rather, it is intended that children can come to grips with *ideas* and not labels and names. Philosophy for Children demands of children thinking about ideas which lie under the mask of words through sharing and discussing issues of common interest that arise. Through the advancement of a Philosophy for Children curriculum, Lipman suggested that philosophy as a discipline can be effortlessly modified to suit the children’s educational wants and capabilities of children, thereby transforming classrooms into what Swanson and Hornsby (2002) called “Schools of Athens for children” (p. 88). For Lipman, Philosophy for Children is the development of critical thinking in children through philosophical dialogue, which evolves in a perspective of cooperation to enrich the group’s perspective — in contrast to competitive argumentation, where victory at all costs is an individual objective (Lipman *et al.*, 1980; Lipman, 1995, 2003).

²⁶ See section 6.3 of this chapter

²⁷ In *Critique of Pure Reason*, B865-869, Immanuel Kant states that one can only teach to *philosophise*.

6.5 Summary and Critique

Philosophy for Children is a Lipman-initiated educational proposal; a systematic and progressive programme specially designed for children from the age of four to eighteen, with the goal of developing their complex thinking, coupled with critical, creative and caring thinking skills. It is doing philosophy with school-going children from preschool until the end of high school before learners enter college or university. The primary goal, as has been noted above, is to develop and stimulate higher-order thinking through a community of inquiry (Accorinti, 2000). For Dewey, it is through the reflexive process of thinking that the child is involved together with peers in a process of scientific inquiry, which follows five logical steps:

- Doubt or awareness of a problem
- Clear definition of the problem
- Suggestion of a number of alternate solutions to the problem
- Choice of a viable and valid alternative
- Concrete experimentation with the chosen solution

I have shown how Philosophy for Children adopts a Deweyan approach to philosophy, by considering philosophy as a form of inquiry that starts with an experienced problem and ends with a resolution of the problem, though the solution continually is subjected to further inquiry. In effect, philosophical inquiry with children entails the “...perpetual effort to come to grips with questions that permit no simple solution and that require continual rephrasing and reformulation” (Lipman et al., 1980, p. 28). I have noted that Lipman equates Dewey’s reflexive thinking to what he refers to as critical thinking or complex thinking and what Daniel et al (2005) call dialogical critical thinking. In connecting academic philosophy with children, Lipman and Bosch (1997) have argued that the former should be seen as “...one version of philosophy while philosophy for children is another in the same way that we have different designs of cars or houses” (p. 3). In other words, and more precisely, Philosophy for Children is the adaptation and

adjustment of philosophical methods for children's use. In Dewey and Lipman's words, Philosophy for Children is a reconstruction of philosophy (Cam, 2000; Dewey, 1920; Lipman, 1991; Sharp, 1987). However, while I acknowledge that Philosophy for Children is only one model among others, it is unique in that it stresses making philosophy accessible to children. Lipman (1991) clarifies this:

When I advocated philosophy in the schools, I was not talking about the tradition of academic philosophy taught in graduate schools of the university. What I was talking about was philosophy redesigned and reconstructed so as to make it available and acceptable and enticing to children. Moreover, the pedagogy by which the subject was to be presented would have to be just as drastically redesigned as the subject itself (p. 262).

The above position of reconstructing philosophy to suit children resonates with Bruner's (1960) claim that "...the foundations of any subject may be taught to anybody at any age in some form" (p. 12).

There is a clear need to expose and explicate the relationships as well as the disjunctures that feature each time people discuss children and philosophy. These include philosophy *for* children, philosophy *with* children, children's philosophies and philosophy *of* childhood. As discussed above, Philosophy for Children is characteristically associated with Lipman's "...pioneering initiative in carrying philosophy, with its classical themes, tools and methods, to schoolchildren... a way of reconstructing the history of Western philosophy in a form available to the young" (Kohan, 1999, p. 7). Lipman in *An Interview with Saeed Naji* (2003), sums up his initiative by explaining that "Philosophy for Children represents an effort to develop philosophy so that it may function as a kind of education. It becomes education that employs philosophy to engage the mind of the child so as to try to satisfy the hunger of the child for meaning" (Lipman & Naji, 2003a)²⁸. Philosophy

²⁸ See <http://www.buf.no/en/read/txt/index.php?page=sn-lip>.

with Children is a small offshoot of Philosophy *for* Children in that it “...utilises discussions of philosophical ideas, but not through specially written stories... (*and*) aims to develop children as young philosophers (*while*) philosophy for children aims to help children utilise philosophy so as to improve all the subjects in the curriculum” (ibid). This implies that Philosophy *for* Children has led to philosophising *with* children, with the adjustment of the preposition thereby indicating that “...children are not just recipients but co-participants in the practice based on philosophical questioning and inquiry” (Kohan, 1999, p. 7). Sharp makes a plausible distinction by alluding to the fact that “philosophy with children is not committed to the use of a structured and sequenced curriculum which is aimed at the reconstruction of the history of philosophy and to the detailed practising and refining of philosophical skills in a manner that it is accessible to young people ...” (Sharp & Naji, n.d.).²⁹ The philosopher is someone who questions to arrive at *some* reality and the child’s mode of being is such that it allows for this inquiry. Philosophical thinking is arguably innate in the mode of cognition of the child. Doing philosophy with children by engaging in dialogues with them in a community of inquiry exercises their capacity for flexibility of thought.

Cam (1998) provides a more summative and comprehensive meaning of what Philosophy for Children is by asserting that there are four assumptions and two goals behind the teaching of philosophy for children. The first assumption was that teaching philosophy to children was largely a Socratic endeavour. Hence, he came to the conclusion that in Philosophy for Children, children:

...will be exploring problems, issues and ideas that touch upon deeper human concerns; that the exploration will largely assume the form of a dialogue between the participants; that these encounters will be ones through which children are brought to a better understanding of each other, and come to examine their own convictions, as well as learning to follow an argument where it leads (p. 1).

²⁹ See <http://www.p4c.ir/index/e-ver/Intreview/Ann%20Sharp-inter.html>.

His second assumption is that the teacher is a facilitator, a guide to introduce children to the process of philosophical inquiry who is not in the classroom “...to instil moral or other doctrines” (p.2). That an education in philosophy is not a narrow intellectual discipline is his third assumption, adding that it is rather one in which children learn through their interaction with their peers, and a process of human liberation. Last, it is his presupposition that Philosophy *for* Children is inclusive. The oral nature of Philosophy for Children is central to its radical democratic role. Children are saturated with written and visual information yet need to be given a voice, a voice to question, to challenge, to construct and deconstruct the meanings around them. The philosophy classroom benefits everyone from the very young children to those who are labelled “less-gifted”. Like other groups in society, such as women’s, ethnic minorities’ and the poor children’s (including the less-gifted’s) views have been marginalised and their claims to knowledge and to reason have been devalued. Philosophy for Children opens up a space for thinking, for sharing beliefs and for creating knowledge (Fisher, 2006). Hence, doing philosophy with children has both individual and social aims. From the individual side the aim is to develop the capacity to think for oneself by displaying such abilities and dispositions such as asking appropriate questions, searching for alternative perspectives and a desire to quest for reasons and evidence. Philosophy for Children has social aims in that the practice of intellectual exchange helps to sustain an open society characterised by the development of the habits of “...listening to others, ...trying to understand views with which you do not agree... and learning to think cooperatively and constructively with others” (Davey, 2005, pp. 3-4). In effect, Philosophy for Children is an expression of thinking as an art for creating meaning especially practised from an early age. It is the process of philosophical thinking with others and training of the child to expand his or her sense of and ability to wonder.

Several thinkers have proposed that philosophical inquiry ought to be part of both the elementary and the secondary school curriculum and should even be introduced in the kindergarten, on the understanding that it would “...lead a child to a clarification of values, a clear and accurate usage of language, to an ability to

recognise valid from invalid inferences and to a critical-consciousness” (Jackson & Ott, 1980, p. 102). To many these aims sound quite plausible, but are they desirable in the education of children? While recognising that members of a community of inquiry may not be isolated from the values they hold, Lipman appears committed that philosophical inquiry is in some way objective and unprejudiced. But, is it? Does it not just adhere to a specific set of values? Is the process of “...helping children learn how to think for themselves” absolute, as outlined in the main goals of the programme (Lipman et al., 1980, p. 53)? Does it not buttress the dominant philosophy that explains the world as an impartial occurrence “...in which individuals can construct their own meaning, values and knowledge on the basis on cognitive reasoning” (Wilks, 1995, p. 50)? Thinking is a natural process as alluded to above and the success of Philosophy for Children, as Lipman admits, “...is related closely to its being accurately developed through a large number of languages (every country wants its own translation...)” (Lipman & Naji, 2003a)³⁰. Lipman’s proposal fails to vividly explore the influence of culture and language on particular thinking skills. Thinking well, good thinking, is influenced by language and culture. I agree with Christie’s (1985) position that “...children arrive at school with an impressive repertoire of thinking skills which are efficient and effective within their own cultural framework...” (p. 56). Yes, all philosophical thought begins with natural wonder and curiosity, and an appetite for meaning (Lipman, 1980), and Philosophy for Children is a “thinking about thinking” programme, but I find the teaching of skills of philosophy lacking in naturalness. The process tends towards enculturation of children by providing them with a setting, that is, the classroom community of inquiry, where members participate in a culturally accepted task. As will be shown in the next chapter, given the basic tenets of community, the community of philosophical inquiry is haunted by the ghost of cultural imposition.

³⁰ See <http://www.buf.no/en/read/txt/index.php?page=sn-lip2>

Lipman fits well in the tradition of reflective education; a practice in which learning to think is crucial for educational aims and practices. For him thinking is the activity of inquiry, and envisages the classroom as a community of inquiry where attention is given to better thinking and its subsequent improvement. Philosophy for Children's highly socio-dialogical approach represents a desirable alternative to oppressive schooling, it can be subjected to criticism in the same way all modern democratic systems can and should be. In Rivage-Seul's (1987b) view, the notion of democracy advanced in Lipman's *Harry Stottlemeier's Discovery* (Lipman, 1974) imports to other countries "a typically north American understanding of critical thinking and democracy" (p.233), which she criticises as serving the interests of an unjust status quo. She claims that the lack of historical sensitivity that typifies Western liberal democratic thinking is evident in Philosophy for Children's preoccupation with impartiality and abstract reasoning skills. For Rivage-Seul, prevailing over injustice demands not merely simply an impartial commitment to objectivity. She adds that critical thinking skills are "...useless in the fight for social justice unless our thoughts are informed by relevant contextual details..." (Rivage-Seul in Rainville, 2002, p. 67). While this observation is to some extent plausible, it would be unfair to Lipman's initiative to accept Rivage-Seul case at face value. We must take into cognisance that Lipman himself allowed his novels and manuals to be adjusted to suit local conditions. However, Rivage-Seul is arguably correct in criticising Lipman's books for lacking historical sensitivity and institutional awareness and for being rather obsessed with impartiality and abstract reasoning skills. In my view, critical thinking skills will carry more weight if such thoughts are grounded on relevant contextual details.

Furthermore, the idea that children are naturally curious is an overgeneralisation, especially validating some children's foundational skills whose backgrounds permit a flourishing curiosity – something that is not always true, as we shall see in Part 3 of this study, of most children in traditional cultures. For example, Harris (1990) posits that " ...curiosity of aboriginal children, particularly from remote communities, is expressed in terms of highly sensitive visual perception of the

natural and social environment” (p. 62). The questions I advance then are: To what extent is Lipman’s doing philosophy with children a natural inclusive endeavour encompassing the thinking skills of indigenous people? How can, does, or should philosophy travel across the divides of culture? Is the Lipmanian Philosophy for Children model a universal programme suited to all cultures? Would it not be cultural imposition to disregard the ways of philosophising with children existing in other cultures? These questions are the central concern of Part 3 of this study.

Chapter 7: The Community of Philosophical Inquiry as Pedagogy

7.1 Introduction

In modern and postmodern times “...the use of the term community has remained... associated with the hope of reviving once more the closer, harmonious type of bonds between people vaguely attributed to past ages” (Hoggett, 1997, pp. 11-15). What is “community”, and why should educators be engaged in thinking about and discussing it? This notion is becoming a leading component of educational discourse today, with treatises on community learning (Peterson, 1992), classroom community (Bridges, 1995), community of practice (Wenger, 1998), community of learners (Rogoff, Matusov, & White, 1996), among many others, as one searches for topical issues in education. In its various uses, the semantics of community mediates between individuals and society, between local and global, between self-interests and common interests, between place and placelessness, and between inclusion and exclusion (Connell, 2003). Often there is implicit here an inherent “goodness”: local is good; common is good; place is good; and inclusion is good. Rather than deal with ambiguity, community theorists take community as a given object of social order situated between individuals and society. Thus a number of contesting definitions of the notion are found, from community as a geographical area (Gusfield, 1975) to community as value (Frazer, 1999). The idea of community and the practice of philosophy are central to the work of practitioners in education (Schleifer, 1996). My intention in this chapter is to foreground “community” in the phrase “community of inquiry” in Philosophy for Children.

Inquiry is a dynamic process of opening up to wonder and puzzlement, and coming to know and understand the world. As such, it is an activity that pervades all aspects of life and is essential to the way in which knowledge is created. Based on the belief that

understanding is constructed, inquiry is the activity of people working and dialoguing jointly as they pose and solve the problems that concern them; make findings and rigorously test the discoveries that arise in the course of shared activity. As Bleazby puts it, inquiry is initiated once we encounter situations that are fragmented or incomplete in some way and we are unable to respond to them in a meaningful, purposeful and intelligent way (Bleazby, 2007). Thus, inquiry can be said to be a purposeful search for meaning in order to be in harmony with one's environment.

It is quite fashionable to talk of education as aiming at the improvement of thinking, and reference to education in terms of teaching for thinking, rather than teaching for learning (Splitter and Sharp, 1995), is popular in discourses on teaching and learning. The poor state of competent thinking, especially among graduates and students, has often provoked educationalists to question:

- 1) How should thinking be treated: as a separate subject on the curriculum or as a set of procedures, informing in the existing subjects?; and
- 2) Should the emphasis of teaching be placed on the process rather the subject matter — a question of pedagogy versus andragogy (stressing the acquisition of the content) — or the reverse?

As explained in the previous chapter, Lipman and his associates queried the quality of the proficiency of the quality of abstract thinking and reasoning that young people displayed, especially in that they:

- Do not think constructively, flexibly, and creatively
 - Do experience difficulty... to find reasons for their opinions
 - Do not welcome challenges to, or questioning of, their opinions...
- (Splitter & Sharp, 1995, p. 6)

This chapter aims to critically examine the concept of community of inquiry as a process of doing philosophy with children. To do this, I will analyse the notions of community and inquiry separately before synthesising their meaning in the phrase “community of inquiry” in the context of Philosophy for Children. A brief historico-

philosophical view of community of inquiry is necessary to further ground my explication of the notion. I will also attempt to situate, conceptually, the community of inquiry as exemplified by Matthew Lipman and his associates in the context of a classroom.

7.2 The Notion of “Community”

The term “community” has been distinguished by Gusfield (1975) according to its two uses, that is, the territorial/geographical and the relational. The relational makes reference to “...the quality of character of human relationship, without reference to location (p. xvi). Frazer adds by that community can be approached as a *value* with associated elements of solidarity, commitment and trust, or it can be approached as a descriptive category *or a set of variables*, although he agrees that the two are intertwined and often difficult to isolate in practice (Frazer, 1999). It may be pertinent to observe that *community as place* is where people have something in common and this shared element is represented spatially, for example, a classroom community of learners. One may also look at *interest (or elective) communities* as consisting of people who share a common characteristic besides place, and this links them together into some form of relationship which Hoggett (1997) calls “...the conceptual space within which non-place forms of community can be understood” (p. 7). Such includes examples like “community of inquirers” and learning communities. Interest and place communities may coincide, although Wilmott (1989) adds *attachment* as the third dimension to the two, contributing the element of a sense of identity.

We can also understand “community” in Smith’s view. He recognises its crucial role in generating people’s sense of belonging, that is, its members’ perception of the importance of its culture (Smith, 2001), or what Putman calls “social capital” (Putman, 2000). Membership in this sense is a feeling one has invested to become a member and therefore has a right to belong. The members of a group have something in common with each other. Sprod (2001) characterises a community as comprising a collection of individuals who have something in common, such as similar interests, aims, purposes,

intentions or beliefs. Their common denominator helps to distinguish them from other possible groups.

The notion of community as *value* mentioned earlier on can be measured against the members' ability to exhibit certain qualities of communal life by behaving in line with certain expectations and taking these on. These include tolerance, reciprocity and trust. However, these attributes need to be voluntary; they must not be imposed on members. Tolerance involves an "...openness to others; curiosity; ...respect, a willingness to listen and learn" (Walzer, 1997, p. 11), while trust will involve the confident expectation that people will act in consistent, honest and appropriate ways. Ridley (1997) further explicates these dispositions by asserting that:

Humans have social instincts... (*and are*) equipped with predispositions to learn how to cooperate, to discriminate the trustworthy from the treacherous, to commit themselves to be trustworthy, to earn good reputations... this instinctive cooperativeness is the very hallmark of humanity and what sets us apart from animals (p.249).

Membership that individuals gain in a community provides them with the sense of belonging and identification; a feeling, belief and expectation that one fits in the group and has a place there; a feeling of acceptance and a willingness to sacrifice for the group (McMillan & George, 1986). It is hoped that as a result of personal investment in the group membership will be more meaningful and valuable.

Given the above conditions that seek to explain community, what then is the place of the self in community? Frazer (1999) provides a convincing argument. She writes:

On occasions or at times members experience a centred and bounded entity that includes the self as such; they engage in exchanges and sharing that are personalised; the orientation to each other and to the whole... It is from such occasions that "the spirit of community" or "sense of community" is achieved... [T]he aspiration to community is an aspiration to a kind of connectedness that transcends the mundane and concrete tangle of social relationships (p. 83).

The above is supported by Buber's (1947) notion of man's encounter with man when he explains that encounter is an event in which relation happens. For Buber, we can only grow and develop once we have learnt to live in relation to others and to recognise the possibilities of the space between us. Buber's (1947), and Gusfield's (1975) views discussed earlier, are explored best in detail in Chapter 9 as I discuss the notion of *ukama*. This indicates the place of intersubjectivity in human existential circumstances. Kennedy (2004a), in his *Communal Philosophical Dialogue and the Intersubject*, writes:

To understand myself as an intersubject means assuming that at any given moment I am only half what I feel I am and half how I actually behave... half of what I tell myself about who or what I am and half what the culture and historical moments tells me... Sometimes we think we control our selves but are in fact acting completely according to others' expectations, and sometimes vice versa... it is always the case that the moment we are in the presence of an other... we are one system — a mutual or multiple being — a hydra (p. 202).

7.3 Inquiry

Inquiry is about the search for meaning and truth. Being in a position to offer reasons and meanings relies on a sense of curiosity, on a conscious desire to find out more about the nature of our world. This desire is rooted in a general impulse to get to the bottom of things; to get at the truth. The concern for truth propels individuals to seek meanings and reasons so that understanding depends on underlying intellectual curiosity; on caring about truth for its own sake (Tishman, Jay, & Perkins, 1993)³¹. Besides, human understanding is an active process, involving the *construction* of reasons and meanings. As Dewey (1916) asserts:

...[N]o thought, no idea can possibly be conveyed as an idea from one person to another. When it is told, it is to the one whom it is told, another given fact, not an

³¹ Tishman, Jay and Perkins (1993) identify caring for truth for its own sake as one of seven "good thinking dispositions".

idea. The communication may stimulate the other person to realise the question for himself and think out a like idea, or it may smother his intellectual interest and suppress his dawning effort at thought. But, what he directly gets cannot be an idea. Only by wrestling with the conditions of the problem at firsthand; seeking and finding his own way out, does he think (p.188).

The explanation given by Dewey describes the process of converting in which learners translate information into new knowledge they know themselves. But, the above claim can be challenged in that while it is acceptable that learners are their own knowledge makers, they cannot dispense with the place of the social *other*. Thinking, as will be shown in this study, involves the individual and the *other*. The above view has in recent times become a buzzword in educational theory and practice (Meyer, 2003) under the label *constructivism*, referring plainly to “a view of learning and development that emphasises the active role of the learner in building understanding and making sense of the world” (Eggen & Kauchak, 2001, p. 56). Inquiry then is the active questioning of underlying assumptions. As Lipman (1994) puts it, “...inquiry begins because what has been encountered – some aberration, some discrepancy, something that defies being taken for granted — captures our interest and demands our reflection and investigation” (p.229). But, to be said to inquire “...one must not only inquire about something... (*but*) one must also make some progress – at least if such progress is possible” (Gardner, 1996, p. 102). In other words, if dialogue is supposed to be progressive it should be productive, that is, “...participants must in fact produce something of substance, which, in turn, would make that dialogue substantive” (Dewey, 1983, p. 35). Hence, without the necessity of attempting to reach truth, a dialogue would have no direction, and there would be no motivation for its participants.

Successful inquiry certainly moves towards a considerably clearer view of the subject under investigation at the end of the inquiry process than at the start of it. It is not aimless but the process has some end in view; a product and as such the “...sole object of inquiry is the settlement of opinion” (Peirce, 1955, p. 10). Progress reinforces the practice of inquiry. In addition, Lipman (1991) views inquiry as “...self-correcting practice... the supervening practice of self-correction that is added to a practice” (p. 40).

Thus inquiry becomes a self-critical practice that is exploratory and inquisitive. But, it is generally social or communal in that “...it rests on a foundation of language, of scientific operations, of symbolic systems, of measurements... all of which are uncompromisingly social” (p.229). Splitter (1990) provides a more succinct definition of inquiry when he writes:

[Inquiry is] what we have to do when we want to understand the why and whereof of things. An inquiry is, fundamentally, a search: a search for answers to questions and puzzles that confront us — or better, a search for understanding (which may lead to answers but does not even assume that we know what questions to ask)... Inquiry is, necessarily, self-correcting. This reflective — or reflexive-dimension of inquiry — reminds us that inquiry is a mode (or, perhaps, many modes) of thinking (p.30).

Similarly, Dewey conceived inquiry as transactional, open-ended and implicitly social, proceeding “...from doubt to the resolution of doubt” (Schon, 1992, p. 122). In effect, Morehouse (2010a) believed that it was in the specific and doubtful situation that reflection is precipitated and he says “...we are doubtful because the situation is inherently doubtful” (p. 106). Hence, “inquiry begins with the inherently doubtful – with the confusing, obscure or conflictual situation” (ibid). Therefore, we are persuaded to inquire because we are in a perplexed and obscured situation which forces us to enter into a transaction with the problematic situation. Schon (1992) agrees “...the inquirer does not stand outside the situation like a spectator, he is in transaction with it” (p. 122). There is then unanimity among the definitions provided by the aforementioned scholars in that inquiry begins with doubt, questions and puzzles, and proceeds to struggle in search of settled opinions or answers. There also appears to be agreement that it is a social enterprise aiming at truth.

7.4 A brief history of “*community of inquiry*”

The phrase “community of inquiry” has its origins in the ideas of C.S. Peirce³² (Pardales & Girod, 2006), while, for Morehouse (2010a), he is the “godfather of community of inquiry” (p. 24). To understand Peirce’s (1955) view of community of inquiry, we need to appreciate his criticism of Descartes’s philosophy. First, he rejects that philosophy must begin in complete doubt but rather starts from action on the world. Second, he argues against the idea of truth and certainty as being held in individual consciousness as this would make individuals “absolute judges of truth” (p. 229), which to him is destructive. Rather, he proposed that people should come together to work together as jury to ideas and theory, and this has informed Peirce’s conception of community of inquiry. Peirce stresses the value of the collective minds as he writes:

...when a theory has been broached it is considered to be on probation until this agreement is reached. After it is reached, the question of certainty becomes an idle one, because there is no one left who doubts it. We individually cannot reasonably hope to attain the ultimate philosophy which we pursue; we can only seek it, therefore, for the *community* of philosophers (p. 229).

In support, Murphy (1990) argues that by coming together in agreement “...one can speak of knowledge, truth and reality but these concepts will be grounded in the community of inquirers, not in the individual consciousness” (p.12). For Peirce, the scientific method represents the opposite of solipsism — the belief that knowledge of anything outside one’s own mind is uncertain; that is, the view that “I am the only mind which exists”. Hence, Peirce concluded that “What distinguishes it (*a community of inquiry*) from all other methods of inquiry is its cooperative or public character” (Buchler, 1955, p. x).

³² Charles Saunders Peirce (1839-1914) was an American scientist and philosopher who criticised the dominance of the Cartesian epistemological view that the mind is the storehouse of knowledge where ideas are clearly perceived. He deplored Descartes’ view that the test of certainty is located in the individual consciousness.

Besides explaining the issue of community in epistemological terms, Peirce also treats it from the metaphysical viewpoint. For him, there is an independent world that is separate from human minds, about which we can develop belief. He posits that we come to know the world by means of a communal and pluralistic community of inquirers engaged in a scientific method of inquiry. He therefore arrived at the supposition that “the opinion which is fated to be ultimately agreed upon by all who investigate, is what we mean by truth, and the object represented in this opinion is the real...” (Peirce, 1955, p. 38). It is a Peircean understanding that through persistent communal inquiry the community will arrive at the same conclusion, which then becomes the truth.

Peirce also considers inquiry as being embodied in the scientific method of arriving at conclusions through synthetic reasoning (Pardales & Girod, 2006). This kind of reasoning is “...inductive in its character as it moves from old beliefs, through experience, to new beliefs” (Pardales & Girod, 2006, p. 301). Therefore, what is important in knowledge production, for Peirce, is the method of inquiry rather than the fact of a belief being held, since inquiry using the methods of science is the best way to satisfy our doubts. Peirce maintains that inquiry is a rational process. However, it is by subjecting our individual thinking to a community of others that individuals come to correct and modify their ideas in the course of living their ideas. The community thus becomes the arbitrator of values and the rationalisation for producing reliable knowledge.

Dewey has also contributed immensely to the development of the notion of community of inquiry, building on Peirce’s ideas. Although Dewey never uses the term community of inquiry, “...what emerges from his writings are the distinguishing characteristics of a community, as opposed to that of an aggregate, and what it means for a community to inquire” (Nowell, 1992, p. 3). He saw schools as institutions through which society can transform itself towards greater democracy as well as the institutions themselves promoting a democratic culture in their daily practices. In *Democracy and Education* (1916), Dewey asks a question “...Why are children so full of questions outside school... and there is a conspicuous absence of curiosity about subject-matter of school lessons?” (p.153). He provides a partial answer:

There must be more actual material, more stuff, more appliances, and more opportunity for doing things, before the gap can be overcome... And where children are engaged in doing things and in discussing what arises in the course of their doing, it is found, even with comparatively indifferent modes of instruction, that children's inquiries are spontaneous and numerous, and the proposals of solution advanced, varied, and ingenious" (Dewey, 1916).

Dewey, arguing from a pragmatist's point of view, sees knowledge as a product of the process of inquiry in which individuals as active agents are "...not only in a permanent process of thinking about nature but also in a permanent intercourse with it" (Planas, 2004, p. 89). Hence, there is no natural access to reality except by the inquisitive search for it.

Dewey also emphasised the sociality of knowing by stressing that workable ideas are not built by the individual self alone but are warranted only by a collective inquiry through social dialogue. Human beings, for him, form habits through the activity of reconstruction of experience and in the process these habits form the self. But he contends that the self develops through the interaction of the self and the external aspects of the environment:

Honesty, chastity, malice, peevishness, courage, triviality, industry, irresponsibility are not private possessions of a person. They are working adaptations of personal capacities with environing forces. All virtues and vices are habits which incorporate objective forces. They are interactions of elements contributed by the make-up of an individual with elements supplied by the out-world (Dewey, 1930, p. 16) .

Dewey recognises the role the environing conditions, a society or some specific group play in forming the individual's habits, responsibilities and virtues. Hence "...conduct is always shared...(and) conduct should be shared..." (Rogoff, 1990, p. 16), since individuals are not alone in the world. It is impossible to form habits if we were to live in a "moral vacuum" without others to "...approve, disapprove, protest, encourage, share and resist" (ibid) our habits. This implies that a transcendental self without others

becomes vacuous or no self at all, since habits are products of the self's interaction with its environment. Through the envining others, Dewey acknowledges, individuals grow, and the self is never complete and static but is always in a process of becoming (Dewey, 1944). The capacity to think reflectively enables a continuous reconstruction of experience. But, how does this "*becoming person*" in the Deweyan view respond to the traditional African metaphysics of "*being is becoming*"? Are there any points of harmony or resonance? These issues will be examined in Part Three of this study. Through elective thinking human beings act purposefully, produce our own meanings and shape their own environment instead of the environment and others determining their habits. To this end, Dewey emphasises the place of individual autonomy as a determining self in the presence of mutual adaptation, communication, cooperation and coordination of interests and actions. This speaks to the need for conjoint actions and communal inquiry. In his view, a community of inquiry is:

...The means to work through diverse and conflicting perspectives so as to construct meanings and practices that are inclusive of multiple perspectives. In communal inquiry individuals identify a common problem, collaboratively construct a solution, apply the solution and jointly undergo the consequences, resulting in them possessing a common meaning, a shared value and a similar change in habit or character (Dewey, 2004, pp. 11-15).

In Dewey's view, thinking is an activity that involves the internalisation of the processes that typify communal inquiry or dialogue. Thus, when we encounter different others, we are driven to critically weigh against each other alternative views, seek out reasons to validate our beliefs and build claims and in the end self-correct. Through paying attention and responding to what others think we revive and learn what it is to think for ourselves and through dialogue, articulating, contributing and modifying our ideas we become accountable for what we say and think (Fisher, 1996). The formation of the self therefore is a capacity for growth. It is the development of human character according to its potential through the interface with its environment. Consequently, in Dewey's view, we are unavoidably dependent on each other for the capacity to inquire and for the common meanings that are necessary for autonomy and growth as the

human being is an individual only as one relates well with others. However, within the community a high value is placed not only on giving good reasons for one's assertions, but just as important is the ability to understand for oneself the reasons why one thinks as one does (Nowell, 1992) and so every individual "is thinking in relation to the common perspective in his own special way" (Juuso, 2007, p. 97).

In sum, the notion of community of inquiry is rooted in epistemological, metaphysical, ontological assumptions. First, the community of inquiry sees knowledge and truth as a human construct that does not belong to any one person but rather to all persons. As such is something shared and so it is not reserved for certain individuals but rather can be discovered through inquiry, whether collectively or individually. It is something to be built upon, revised, enlarged and viewed in perspective. Thus, it is the community of inquiry in this sense that is the subject of knowledge rather than single individuals and through communicative, dialogical inquiry in a community of others individuals come to know. Each individual contributes a unique perspective to the community and as members talk and share their experiences, meaning is created, reflected upon, assessed, and then recreated. As Benjamin and Echeverria (1992) posit, the members of the community come to see knowledge as a social element "...rooted in human interests, activities and conditions" (p. 77). Second, the community of inquiry view assumes that to become a person one has to become a member of the community, thereby marking the emergence of personhood. The person (self) therefore is a social construct that we build up ourselves with the help of others from an early age. It is implicit that to recognise oneself as a person one has to be able to view one's thoughts in a reflective manner, coupled with one's ability to recognise the other's point of view. Hence, members of a community of inquiry come to self-understanding through dialogue with others in the community.

Third, ethical assumptions suggest communities of inquiry as having the moral dimension in which members are autonomous citizens capable of enlightened independent moral judgments and voluntary cooperation; people who can think for themselves, think freely and drawing one's own inferences all in liaison and interaction with one's peers. As children, men and women in a community of inquiry, persons are

capable of cultivating dispositions of tolerance, respect for others, self-control, self-criticism and self-correction — dispositions that may in the end lead to morally reasonable actions. Thus, the community of inquiry recognises that it is also a moral community (Pritchard, 1992). Individual members in the community of inquiry will, it can be supposed, need to discover norms and criteria for their actions and through interaction with others in community. Therefore, through engaging with others in a community of dialogue, the practice of a democratic communal inquiry becomes moral education *par excellence*.

7.5 Community of inquiry within Philosophy for Children

In giving the background to the notion of community of inquiry, I have pointed out that the notion has a two-pronged structure. First, the aspect of community which invokes “... a spirit of cooperation, care, trust, safety, and a sense of common purpose...” (Splitter & Sharp, 1995, p. 18) and, second, inquiry as a form of “...self-correction driven by the need to transform that which is intriguing, problematic, confused, ambiguous...” (ibid), leading to some conclusion though tentative. In this section, I wish to situate the community of inquiry in the context of doing philosophy with children. I will argue that Philosophy for Children as a programme is best explained through the community of inquiry as pedagogy. It was the initiative of Lipman’s great insight to marry the community of inquiry as pedagogy with philosophy as doing within the curriculum for elementary and secondary learners (Morehouse, 2010b). In effect, Lipman summarises the essence of the *community of inquiry* by commenting that:

When we underscore the word “inquiry” in “community of inquiry” we emphasise the investigative role of such communities. This is the role that leads them to deliberate with regard to concepts, evidence, jurisdictions, reasons, definitions etc... When we underscore “community” in “community of inquiry” we stress the social and creative aspects of the process... (Lipman, 2003, p. 111).

At this juncture, I propose that *community* denotes togetherness. A community that works together has mutual respect and concern, and a recognisable and agreed upon presuppositions and procedures. However, it takes a long process to form and develop

although togetherness “...may not be essential at the outset of a process of inquiry” (Pardales & Girod, 2006, p. 308). Unlike other professional communities consisting of explicitly common interests, a classroom community of inquiry is unique in that 1) children are in school involuntarily and 2) they have no input at all in the curriculum they study. Therefore, coercing learners to be part of a community in which they have no interest would appear unjustified. In addition to the complexity of the formation of communities of inquiry, it takes teacher expertise, administrative and curricular support to enhance a conducive setting for the teacher and the learners.

Looking at philosophy as an activity, conversation, dialogue, inquiry and discussion are at the centre of the community of inquiry as practised within Philosophy for Children. Lipman (1991) recommended that there is a need to “...convert the classroom into a community of inquiry” (p.15). His case is founded on six assumptions of what he calls the reflective paradigm of education:

1. Education is the outcome of participation in a teacher-guided community of inquiry, among whose goals are the achievement of understanding and good judgement.
2. Students are stirred to think about the world when their knowledge of it is revealed to them to be ambiguous, equivocal and mysterious.
3. The disciplines in which inquiry occurs are assumed to be neither non-overlapping nor exhaustive; hence their relationship to their subject matter are quite problematic.
4. The teacher’s stance is fallible rather than authoritative.
5. Students are expected to be thoughtful and reflective, and increasingly reasonable and judicious.
- 6- The focus of the educational process is not on the acquisition of information but on the grasp of relationships within subject matters under investigation (p.14).

In short, Lipman's central concepts in his reflective model include inquiry, community, reasonableness, judgement, autonomy, and higher-order thinking.

Second, the introduction of the novel (narrative) as a stimulus for raising questions and exploring issues is a model for intellectual behaviour in a community of inquiry. Lipman uses purpose – written stories, or what he calls narratives, and stresses the importance of learners being able to identify with characters in the stories and especially with their experiences (Davey, 2004). The third key issue to Lipman's community of inquiry is the appreciation that thinking aloud is a means for self-correction — a means to better thinking (Morehouse, 2010a). Of greater significance is Lipman's view that an improved thinking is made possible if children think *together* aloud. By anchoring it in the ideas of Vygotsky and Mead on thinking as internalised dialogue, Lipman et al (1980) and his associates view thinking aloud as a way to improve thinking by "...making the internal external" (p. 23). They argue that children doing philosophy well with others is a way of actively engaging in helping each other in interpreting not only the text, but also the meaning of one's experiences and to collaborate in search of richer and wider interpretations of this experience. It is by so doing that Philosophy for Children becomes one means to intellectual and social virtue that brings about the transformation of persons into more reasonable individuals with a commitment to the making of a reasonable world.

Philosophy for Children recognises the making of errors, lack of knowledge, incorrect or inconclusive answers not as something to be avoided at all costs but rather as instruments of coming to a wider understanding of not only ourselves but also of the world we live in. By discovering that they are fallible, people change and develop, forming the idea of "I may be wrong and you may be right..." (Popper, 1966, p. 240). It is by accepting fallibility and admitting that all human beings run the possibility of error and have the capacity to be wrong, as well as acknowledging and recognising error, that we gain and create a space for new knowledge through actively reframing our old understanding. Fallibility is assumed and self-correction becomes a way of life. I find it sufficient, therefore, for the community of philosophical inquiry to set a favourable environment in which children are prepared to tolerate, support and

encourage difference and are therefore willing “...to engage others in a communicative interchange that makes the meaningful juxtaposition of different views possible” (Burbules, 1995, p. 94). The assertion “I don’t know” can be the starting point of the process of discovering that can reveal not only knowledge, but also meaning – the meaning of our quest to understand and our need to transform ourselves into the more wondering, curious, intelligent and caring human beings.

In addition, the community of philosophical inquiry is also directed by democratic principles in which each person’s views and insights are to be heard, respected and valued as a latent source of important insights. The community comes to generate alternative meanings, distinct perspectives and communal assistance to its members. Not only are each participant’s rights respected through expressing differences, but such expression is a means of supplementing the developing self. The engagement of children in a dialogical engagement enables them “to hear the differences offered by others because they are not personally affronted”. Through the play of differences, they are “...making something that they share with others but that is no one’s personal property” (Shorter, 1996, p. 345). Children in a community of philosophical inquiry are involved in the process of trying to understand one another and, to do this, they must learn to talk coherently, and expressively and at the same time listen to each other. Furthermore, they must develop the capacity to enter into each other’s world and, by so doing; they adopt a compassionate open mind. These dialogical dispositions call for intellectual humility and an authentic willingness to self-correct. Dialogue, in this sense, implies any encounter that takes cognisance of the world’s difference. However, accommodating the views of others does not mean simply giving in to their ideas, but rather that one is ready to accept a court of reasons that can be subjected to public scrutiny since, “...knowledge about reality is partial and also fallible and revisable” (Planas, 2004, p. 87). This goes to stress the indispensable role of the community in knowledge construction. It is considerably more than a merely polite and superficial willingness to tolerate an opposing or novel point of view — behaviour which may well lack what Russell calls “any inward readiness to give weight to the other side” (Russell, 1971, p. 106). In effect, the community of inquiry should remove intellectual fears and in the process prevail over blind confidence in archaic ideas stored in the facts. It

provides a setting in which reasonable persons are nurtured. Splitter and Sharp (1995) conclude that:

[t]he reasonable person respects others and is prepared to take into account their views and their feelings, to the extent of changing their own mind about issues of significance, and consciously allowing her own perspective to be changed by others. She is, in other words, willing to be reasoned with (p. 6).

Splitter and Sharp use the notion of respect in the sense of listening to others' views. I would accept their definition of the reasonable person as long as the persons involved agree to tolerate other people's points of view in order to challenge or disagree with them. To completely demean another person's proposition before listening to the gist of it is tantamount to disrespect and therefore unreasonable. The question that I address in the next section is: How can the inquiry process in the Philosophy for Children classroom foster the development of the virtues of reasonableness among its members (children and teachers alike), as described by Splitter and Sharp above?

7.6 The inquiry process

The community of inquiry as a pedagogical framework and method puts into operation Dewey's notion of education as reconstruction of experience through the creation of a collaborative structure of choice and initiative in the classroom, with teachers and learners sharing in the selection and problematisation of themes and issues. The community of inquiry as expressed in Philosophy for Children is both a structure and a process. It is a structure in that it is a participatory community of discourse with a purpose to engage in a deliberate inquiry, guided by reason into questions chosen by the community itself. In effect, all community members democratically choose and arrive at the central question to be focused on in each particular philosophy session. The physical configuration of the classroom community of inquiry "...maximises the opportunities for participants to communicate with, and behave democratically toward one another; a roundtable format or, perhaps, a collection of smaller groups" (Splitter & Sharp, 1995, p. 18). Lipman (1991) summarises five steps that characterise the community of inquiry:

1) *the communal reading of a text*, 2) *the construction of an agenda*, i.e. the identification of questions which the reading of the text has raised and the cooperative decision about where to begin the discussion; 3) *solidification*, which includes the articulation of positions and counter-positions, the definition of terms under discussion, and the search for criteria by which to make sound judgements about the subject; 4) *exercises and discussion plans*, based on the ideas in the text; (and) 5) *further responses*, which may be in form of creative writing, dramatisation, art, or some other modality (pp. 241-243).

The above structure and process has ramifications in all the elements of the educational practice. First is the text, which Lipman (1991) calls “the text of the future” (p.220) which requires a complete overhaul, especially in terms of organisation with a hierarchical order according to the concepts that it stands for, a pretext for the discussion of the meaningful themes and issues which are embedded in it. Lipman himself wrote *Pixie* for the junior school, *Harry Stottlemeier’s Discovery* for middle school, and *Suki* for secondary pupils to suit the ability and level of learners, and which are all “...about school children and the experiences they have” (Nicol, 1990, p. 179). This implies a change in the role of the teacher as well as the place of the learner, as will be shown below.

The community of inquiry interprets the classroom as a place for cognitive apprenticeship³³; a complex site in which children are active participants; exposed to opportunities of knowledge construction through the reorganisation of their positions in the learning process. The community thus becomes the setting or the field for holding relationships and consequently making meaning. The concept of relationship in community with others (*ukama*) will be explored in detail in Chapter 9. This new arrangement involves the assimilation of new knowledge to current schemes, and

³³ See Barbara Roggoff’s study of cognitive apprenticeship in which she claims that “...children’s participation in communicative processes is the foundation on which they build their understanding” (Rogoff, 1990, p.196)

accommodation of current schemes to new knowledge (Kennedy, 1995). Unlike the traditional model of education, the community of philosophical inquiry engages both the learner and the teacher in initiating the knowledge to be acquired and through the group dialogical encounter. Similarly, Sharp writes that “The success of the community is compatible with, and dependent on, the unique expression of individuality” (Sharp, 1991, p. 33). In response, Traverso (1996) writes:

...we can conceive of two levels of development. On the one hand, the development that each individual gains on her or his own thanks to the interaction with the rest of the group and, on the other hand, the strengthening of the community as a function of the interpersonal enrichment gained from dialogue” (p. 86).

Both stress the tension that exists between the significance of maintaining and developing one’s individuality and the value of fitting together with others within a community in which one must be prepared to consider one’s individual ideas to some degree. In addition, the danger is that of conceiving the community as the perfect space for the development of a “common subjectivity” (Traverso, 1996). The classroom community of inquirers, constructed out of similar aged and grouped children assigned to room X and teacher Y, is transformed into a living experience of being with one another (Thomas, 1997). The individual is nurtured by others and in turn offers others unspoken reflections of self through the mirror of philosophic dialogue. In the process, the individual walks a risky journey in communion with others. Individual identity must be maintained at the same time it is enriched and enlarged by the dialogical exchange with the *other*. Hence, the individual internalises or reconstructs the knowledge generated in the community for the development of the *self*.

So what is the role of the individual in knowledge construction? There is a shift of power from the teacher towards empowerment of learners, thereby validating Peirce’s assertion that “one man’s experience is nothing, if it stands alone... It is not my experience, but our experience that has to be thought of; and this us has indefinite possibilities” (Planas, 2004, p. 48). Hence, both the individual learners and the teacher are in a reciprocal intercourse of learning. But, the question that is frequently asked is:

How much guidance should the teacher give? And, similarly, how much input should the teacher provide? (UNESCO, 2007).

Kennedy, in his article: *The Philosopher as Teacher: the role of a facilitator in a community of philosophical inquiry* (2004), points out that the function of a successful facilitator in this discursive psychodynamic structure is not an easy one to describe (Kennedy, 2004b). Several schools of thought have presented their views in this regard.³⁴ However, there appears to be a general misconception about the role of the teacher in a community of inquiry, especially given the claim that children in the community of inquiry “...construct their own meaning and care about the procedures and each other” (Bleazby, 2006, p.47). Does this imply that teachers are mere neutral onlookers or equal contributing members in the community of inquiry? Berrian (1985) provides testimony of her classroom experience and writes, “With me as a listener, the students are free to interact with each other. That’s what I want them to do. I want them to forget that I’m there. The important thing is for them to express their opinion and give reasons for their point of view” (p. 44).

While the idea of allowing learners a democratic life is defensible in a classroom community of inquiry, there is clearly a need to check against a chaotic and disruptive classroom environment. It would not be a desirable state of affairs to allow a situation of “anything goes”. I tend to agree with Sprod (2001) and Murris (2000) that although the teacher in the classroom community of inquiry does not wholly control the learning process and fill children’s heads with facts, such a classroom would lose focus, direction, and fail to progress (Murris, 2000; Sprod, 2001). While some scholars in Philosophy for Children have often attached to the teacher the label of an “equal

³⁴ Brenifier has drawn an argument from the Socratic maieutics with the teacher maintaining total control of the dialogues by helping children to give birth to their own ideas (Brenifier, 2005a), while Lallane (2002) feels that teachers should actively direct discussions, with learners’ interaction being less significant than establishing habits of rational debate (Lévine, 2004). Jacques Levine prefers a model where the teacher remains silent to allow children to develop their own identities as thinking beings (Metcalf & Game, 2008). It is Matthew Lipman’s position that democracy is the essential objective and so students are given precise roles and the discussion takes place in a controlled setting (Lipman, 1980; 1988; 1991).

partner” and a “co-inquirer” within the community of inquiry, I argue that he or she still holds some degree of authority, especially given that he is a “more knowledgeable other” in terms of his developed capacity for philosophical inquiry (better than any other community member). In addition, the teacher has an added advantage above the rest of the members of the community as he or she has the responsibility to ensure the community environment triggers and scaffolds rigorous, purposeful and progressively more complex communal inquiry. With the traditional roles of the teacher as “...a deliverer of knowledge, a disciplinary or epistemic authority, as inspirer, or even a triggerer of knowledge or a “midwife”³⁵ (Kennedy, 2004 ,p.753), each of these roles will mean completely different things when used in the context of a group process of community as a dynamic self-organised system. However, given the embedded aim of the community of inquiry, the goal of the facilitator is to distribute his function thereby becoming an ordinary community member; a co-inquirer. Such changes are significant in terms of power relations in that students become an important part of the classroom community; contributing their thoughts, creating and sustaining discussions, being confronted with their own thoughts and those of their peers in an environment of mutual respect with an experienced inquirer — the teacher.

As pointed out earlier, the teacher as a facilitator cannot completely relinquish his or her position as an authority but has to be “absorbed” by the group so that the group appropriates and internalises the facilitator’s role. Thus, facilitation of a community of inquiry is a matter of expertise on the part of the teacher by showing his/her capability to manipulate a particular technique unique to each inquiry. This calls on him/her to have a good knowledge of individuals who form the community, as well as how he/she handles arguments that emerge in each group as each group is similar to the others. This goes to show that no two facilitating moves are identical. So, in this regard, the facilitator lives with perennial uncertainty and therefore adopts an experimental stance

³⁵ In Plato’s characterisation of Socrates as a midwife, he attempts to show the relationship between teacher and learner and about education. In addition to illustrating Socrates’ good-natured method of searching for truth and meaning, it provides insight into the nature, purposes and functions of the teacher-learner relationship.

towards his/her work, and collaborates in the development and the implementation of pedagogical and organisational innovations within his/her own setting (Kennedy, 1995). But, does this imply that teachers in individual schools can commit themselves to building communities of inquiry without collaborating with their peers as authentic professionalisation of Philosophy for Children? As will be examined later, there is a need for in-servicing of existing teachers as well the introduction of student teachers to the pedagogy of Philosophy for Children.

There are additional challenges that confront the teacher. Transforming the classroom into an inquiring community and ensuring the accompanying place of dialogue in the learning process and in the curriculum, teachers will argue that there is too much to teach and that education in the present does not accommodate dialogue. Given the standard paradigm of education as postulated by Lipman, teachers would always find inadequate time to allow learners to dialogue at the expense of teaching for knowledge and examinations at the end of the programme. Stakeholders, including parents, institutions of higher learning, the state and industry, to name a few, would not tolerate an education system that spends a lot of teaching time on dialogue rather than transmitting knowledge. The general understanding of school education is that of an institution whose success or failure is measured by learner performance in standardised examinations, usually written in nature. At the same time, teachers are used to asking questions and expecting answers from students. Going into an inquiry with such an attitude, with a closed agenda and an expected outcome will fail to facilitate an open inquiry. It is mistaken, however, to completely rule out the contributions of the teacher's own views, especially since Lipman (1985) proposes that: "The teacher might judge that a particular conclusion or viewpoint has resulted from poor or incomplete reasoning , failing to take relevant considerations into account, refusing to accept counter instances or differences into account" (p. 296).

On the other hand, Splitter and Sharp consent that, despite this role the teacher plays "... no substantive viewpoint is regarded as sacred... as immune from all possible scrutiny or criticism", and so the community of inquiry tends to fail if the teacher is of the conviction that he/she should transmit certain truths. A philosophical discussion, they

maintain should not aim at specific and fixed conclusions. The teacher as a co-inquirer, for Kennedy and Kennedy, “guides, models, coaches inquiry through restating, asking for clarification, identifying connections between ideas, summarising, and posing alternative views” (Kennedy & Kennedy, 2010, p. 4). However, in the process of enforcing procedural rules and modelling the facilitator’s role, the teacher must remain “... philosophically self-effacing, that is, careful not to advance her own ideas as having more weight because of her authoritative role in the group” (ibid) lest teacher interventions “...run the risk of indoctrinating students” (Bleazby, 2006, p. 47). As in the Socratic dialogue, the teacher’s role is to act as a midwife of ideas. He or she coordinates visually the verbal discourse of the group while avoiding imposing any content or ideas by allowing the democratic input of learners’ ideas. When needed, especially to resolve a conceptual blockage, the teacher may, as part of the community of inquiry, contribute and share his/her wisdom. Hence self-effacement as the process of keeping oneself in the background and minimising one’s own actions is a necessary condition of a successful teacher-as-facilitator in a community of inquiry.

7.7 Summary

It has been noted that Philosophy for children comprises, essentially, two major ingredients: an entirely new curriculum – the introduction of philosophy at an early age coupled with the training of teachers to meet this new challenge. The other concerns the process, that is, the setting up of a community of inquiry. The chapter has argued for the convenience of establishing communities of inquiry in the classroom, the efficiency and usefulness of the community of inquiry as a method of doing philosophy with children and the democratic role of the community in its interaction with the society (Planas, 2004). The community of inquiry as pedagogy of doing philosophy with children, is an open, social communicative and argumentation structure that “immerses students and teachers in a social habitus of epistemological curiosity, critical consciousness, non-authoritarian power relations, and authentic democratic practices” (Kennedy & Kennedy, 2010, p. 3). For a novice teacher-facilitator in the practice of the community of inquiry, some epistemological challenges may indeed be threatening, especially given the demands of modelling philosophical moves, such as raising questions of evidence,

insisting on definitions and probing hidden assumptions. The process calls for implicit knowledge on the part of the teacher to recognise when to engage the questions without which the classroom community becomes a mere chatter. The community of inquiry, if not steered with care, may turn out not only to be "...a realm of free inquiry, but also a realm of pressure and alienation" (Simenc, 2008, p. 326). The teacher's crucial role goes beyond mere facilitation and rather more towards making sure that the community formed is about inquiry and so becomes a true community of inquiry, with the whole process structured around the truth, since "...the truth has to be the regulative idea that guides the process" (ibid). Gardner (1995) offers a concise exposition of the place of the facilitator in the search for truth and meaning as she writes:

The novice facilitator must always keep in mind that her long-term goal is to be much more than a facilitator. She must be a model in her passion for truth, a dictator in her demands for excellence in reasoning, a philosophical sensitiser in demonstrating the capacity to focus on the philosophically fruitful, and a leader in ensuring that direction is maintained. We will do novices no small favour by letting them know at the outset that 'inquiry is no mere conversation' and that 'facilitation of inquiry is hard work' (p. 47).

From the outset, the above sounds as if the facilitator is instilling personal knowledge on the participants, thereby imposing his or her indoctrinating will. But Gardner is simply stressing that the role ahead of the facilitator is not an easy one and that without taking due care and without more practice, he/she might end up indoctrinating. In all, the changing role of the teacher and children in community of inquiry in Philosophy for Children is one proposal the advocates of reconstruction of education are introducing in present-day teaching and learning. Both teachers and learners are required to see themselves differently in terms of whom they are, what they do, and how they do it, and the ways they relate to each other. A new conception of teaching as a reformulated communal, rather than introverted, enterprise is ushered in. The child finds in the school a new educational habitat of an adult-child collective in which they are freely permitted to participate and have their voices and points of view heard. Following Dewey, Lipman (1991) calls the community of inquiry "...the embryonic intersection of democracy and

education. The community of inquiry represents the social dimension of democratic practice” (p.249-250), with the dual shift of focus from the teacher to the learners as well as from the individual to the community.

Advocates of Philosophy for Children have in mind the classroom community of inquiry spreading outwards by establishing synergy with other communities thereby leading to mutual transformations and growth (Burgh et al., 2006; Cam, 2000; Splitter & Sharp, 1995). The assumption here is that the community of inquiry will develop in its members dispositions that are more inclusive and respectful of different cultural backgrounds, including finding spaces and time for children who are either timid or aggressive. Hence, it underscores the place of community in personal development. It is also anticipated that the classroom philosophical community of inquiry will change learner groups and, in turn, future adults into more reflective communities in which democratic practices are engendered. But, one can challenge the overgeneralisation implicit in this assumption. For instance, what guarantee is there that children, after engaging in a community of inquiry, will apply collaborative inquiry practices that transcend the classroom? There is a need, therefore, for close links between the democratic character of the classroom community of inquiry, the democratic school and the resultant democratic local and global community — all originating from a philosophical community of children as inquirers. The understanding is that the classroom community of inquiry does not end at the teaching of better thinking. It is assumed that “...it is a form of life for the children to participate in...” (Splitter & Sharp, 1995, p. 20); and a form of ethical practice in which care, respect and trust among equal partners (Pritchard, 1992) thrives. However, in practice, we find a stark contrast between the open, democratic life of the philosophy classroom and the children’s lives in the home and in their life-world in general. This will be explored in detail in Part 3 of this study.

The dynamic of the individual in the community of inquiry is inclusive in that all individual learners are accommodated in the community in the enterprise of internalising the rules and procedures of the collective quest for truth. According to

Lipman and his associates, the community of inquiry as pedagogy and an essential ingredient in Philosophy for Children has as its preconditions:

1. Readiness to reason
2. Mutual respect (of children towards one another, and of children and teachers towards one another)
3. An absence of indoctrination (Lipman, Sharp & Oscanyan, 1980, p.45)

In other words, the community of inquiry is founded on the consideration that participants exhibit attitudes of being dialogically inquisitive, participatory and reflective, reasoned, cognitively skilful, cooperative, sensitive to content, and explorative. The classroom becomes a place of mutual respect, and concern for all participants, children and teachers alike.

I concur, to some extent, with O'Hear's criticism of doing philosophy with children, especially when he challenges how far children can go in reasoning without knowledge. For him, to pursue fundamental questions, especially in the community of philosophical inquiry, demands a high level of engagement with those questions lest it becomes simple, childish philosophising (O'Hear, 1997). However, O'Hear is arguably, overgeneralising, especially when he asserts that philosophical questions only be those that have been made heard by their originators. In other words, this implies that philosophical questions are fixed in time and place. I agree with the advocates of Philosophy for Children referred to in this study that children can be originators of philosophical questions, which even philosophers of worth will find hard to answer. In fact, children's inquisitiveness has often been rubbished under the guise of childishness. For example, they would ask: How do you know you are a person?

But, do children have the right to philosophy? Answering in the affirmative, Splitter and Sharp (1995) write:

...Children have a right to do philosophy, and to contribute, in their own way, to the ideas and traditions, which have come from several thousand years of

reflective inquiry. Not only is philosophy interesting to children, but children have an interest in philosophy, in much the same way as a distant relative might have an interest in a property — whether she knows it or not. Children inherit this interest as part of their heritage (p.115).

The issue of children being capable of engaging in a philosophical enterprise is arguably obvious but with how much rigour and systemacity may they do so? The response is certainly, not as much as adults would do. But, in their own right, they deal with a wide range philosophical questions and concepts in contexts that differ from adults. One can also criticise the use of stories and manuals in Lipman's *Philosophy for Children* curriculum, as these were written in the late 1960s and in the 1970s. Although there have been some new editions and translations, the thinking and concepts remain the same and so do the recommended activities. It appears to me a curriculum such as this contradicts the pragmatic principle of conceptual and contextual reconstruction. Since communities of inquiry change with time and place, I should assume manuals and stories to be adaptive to the realities of context and time. Even in the United States where the stories originated, the different political and economical situations have changed from the ones that were in place when the curriculum was created. Even the concepts recommended for philosophical inquiry in the community of inquiry are explored in the context of practical realities. No curriculum can be universal and be applied in different cultural settings without its relevance being lost. Illustrations of these claims will be explored in detail in Chapter 9.

The question is: To what extent does the Lipmanian view of community in doing philosophy with children resonate with other views of “community” around the world? For example, of what relevance is the African community-oriented worldview in the context of philosophical inquiry, both in Africa and elsewhere? What about introducing the concept of community of philosophical inquiry in contexts that are characterised by authoritarian, dictatorial and autocratic tendencies? Will the practice survive in schools, and of what value will it be to the development of democratic citizens starting from an early age? Can “community” in community of inquiry, as explored above, be equated to the notion of “community” in other cultures, especially those still strongly attached to

tradition? What, for example, does the African notion of community share with the notion of community in Western tradition? These questions will be explored in and will inform the next part of my study.

Part 3 Philosophy for Children: The African Perspective

Chapter 8: Tradition and Modernity: Positioning the African Perspective

The central objective in decolonising the African mind is to overthrow the authority which alien traditions exercise over the African... It must be stressed, however, that decolonisation does not mean ignorance of foreign traditions; it simply means denial of their authority and withdrawal of allegiance from them (Chinweizu, 1987).

8.1 Introduction

From the early 1960s to the present, African scholars outside the social sciences have claimed that there have been, are and will persist to be, widespread psychological and cultural themes and patterns that are unique to sub-Saharan Africa (Lassiter, 2000). As discussed in Chapter 2, the mention of *African society* tends to raise a lot of doubt among some people, especially when it concerns the *notion of “Africa”* in contemporary times (Lassiter, 2000) — as if there is a homogeneous society in Africa. Besides, how far does traditional Africa “live in peace” with modern Africa or it is altogether a thing of the past? “Africa” is exceedingly difficult to define and so many academic and popular discourses on African identities are quite problematic. But, to reject that in contemporary Africa “...there are many threads of continuity, linking the past with the present, the old social order to the new” (Adimora- Ezeigbo, 2003, p. 58) would rather be subjective. One of the central themes of postcolonial African philosophy has been the relationship between tradition and modernity (Horsthemke, 2004). The focus of African philosophers has been on the question of the relevance of the traditions indigenous to Africa, especially regarding the challenges contemporary life. Contemporary Africa’s colonial history, coupled with its inclination towards the

occidental tradition of philosophy, has aroused in the African scholars a need for a critical spirit to reconstruct philosophy in Africa that meets today's existential circumstances. But, to what extent are the traditional modes of thought worthwhile resources for Africa to modernise? I will explore these questions in the context of whether an African perspective of doing philosophy is located in the "cultural revivalism" (Gyekye, 1997, p. 233) paradigm or in the modernist paradigm.

In this chapter, I explore the notion of "the African perspective" as I prepare ground for an examination of the quest for an Africa perspective of Philosophy for Children. I will discuss the African perspective in the sphere of four contestable processes: tradition, modernity, decolonisation and globalisation. The African perspective that I posit focuses on key questions that have currency, including the question, "Where is Africa?", that looks at Africa as a geographical category. To further clarify my project, I attempt answering the following questions:

- 1) What kind of contributions can Africa make to the construction of the contemporary educational discourses?
- 2) How does the tradition/modernity debate contribute to our understanding of an African perspective? and
- 3) Is there a pure African culture which allows us to distinguish unique or truly African concepts or cultural artefacts?

I argue a case for a "paradigm shift" (Popper, 1968)³⁶ – in which assumptions about the African potential are applauded and centred while the externally

³⁶Thomas Kuhn, in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, defined and made popular the concept of "paradigm shift" (Popper, 1968, p. 10). For Kuhn, scientific advancement is not evolutionary, but rather is a "series of peaceful interludes punctuated by intellectually violent revolutions", and, in those revolutions, "one conceptual worldview is replaced by another". Paradigm shift is a change from one way of thinking to another. It's a revolution, a transformation, a sort of metamorphosis. It just does not happen, but rather it is driven by agents of change.

imposed educational paradigms from the West are liberated from the centre and amalgamated with the former to give a hybridised perspective relevant to Africa in the 21st century. I will endeavour to respond to Horsthemke's (2010) question: "Is there a perspective, a body of thought or a particular way of doing philosophy... that can be called African?" (p. 50). In other words, given the new engagements with the politics of the universal, that is the politics of globalism, can we genuinely speak of African exceptionalism? I hope that my attempt to address these questions may pave the way for a debate on the African perspective of Philosophy for Children, which is developed in the next two chapters.

8.2 Globalisation and Decolonisation

The geographic definition of Africa is extensively accepted as settled (Ramose, 2003), as shown in Chapter 2. However, it is the question of what meaning we attach to the adjective "African" when we talk about issues to do with "African", which is a crucial debate in social, political and economic discourses. What and where is the place of postcolonial Africa in a global world? I discuss below the notions of globalisation and decolonisation in respect of Africa as defined above. The fundamental idea is that, as a result of political, economic and social changes the geographical area called Africa has undergone since the last century, it is currently difficult to authentically define anything as "African". As Kigongo (2002) proposes, "...we cannot have a viable existence of the '*African*' given the overwhelming impact of alien elements leading to what is perceived as a collapse of traditional culture..." (p. 54).

African scholars have claimed that there have been widespread psychological and cultural themes that draw attention to clarify and exalt the virtues of what it means to be African, especially in the face of mounting global westernisation and to promote the significance of *Áfricanness*.³⁷ I appreciate the impatience that the

³⁷ African scholars referred to include: Senegalese Leopold Senghor (1963, 1966); Ghanaians G.K. Osei (1971) and Kwame Gyekye (1988; 1996); Kenyans John S.

African intellectuals have, especially given the disappointing politico-economic achievements since the end of colonisation. Their impatience is focused on Africa's difficulties as it seeks to come to terms with its postcolonial condition, and the new economic and social trend called globalisation. However, globalisation is more than anything, a matter of increasing transculturality, especially given that not only does the West influence Africa, but it is itself influenced by trends and developments in Africa and the South (the southern hemisphere). Contemporary globalisation has generated many social, cultural, economic and political changes in Africa. Admittedly, the process of globalisation is "...not unidirectional and there are several trajectories which have generated opposite reactions" (Osha, 2011, p. 153). For instance, globalisation has assisted in speeding up the growth of self-consciousness and cultural identities, together with homogenising certain aspects of the cultures in Africa. Equally, there are several aspects of African tradition that survive parallel to each other as a result of adoption and rejection. However, and most important, Africans have a unique way of managing and cognitively engaging the world, deriving from their rigid and strict indigenous social and cultural environment. Hence, the African perspective I endorse also seeks to reassert Africa's importance in the broader philosophical and cultural evolution of humankind by clarifying and extolling the virtues of what it means to be African in the face of increasing global westernisation. In effect, to talk of an African perspective is to focus an eye on the "...contemporary African experience... throwing light on the contemporary problems... relevant to the condition of life in Africa" (Gbadegesin, 1991).

The African perspective that I argue for does not imply a homogeneous Africa that portrays an Africa consisting of a singular culture, values and standards but rather a diverse continent with more than fifty countries and several thousand languages. As Makgoba (1997) confirms:

Mbiti (1969 & 1992) and Joseph.S.Nyasani (1997); and South Africans Augustine Shutte (1993) and M.W. Makgoba (1997).

African identity and culture are not uniform, have never been; and do not pretend to be... Even within Africa , the north, west, east and southern parts form identifiable clusters of their own. All these are linked by shared values that are fundamental features of African identity and culture (p. 198).

Makgoba recognises the value of the diversity of cultures in Africa while, at the same time, acknowledging that cultures in Africa are linked by some common values that they share. The diversity of cultures in Africa indeed confirm the fertility of human creativity and invention and also “...ensures that there will be variations in the mindset of human cultures and concerns of their peoples” (Abraham, 1992, p. 13). While acknowledging that there are cultural and thought systems unique to Africa, we should also recognise that similar cultural traits may be found on other continents. However, looking for an African perspective of Philosophy for Children implies that there might be peculiar ways of doing philosophy with children in Africa which are much more prominent in Africa than they are elsewhere. My case is in line with Nyasani’s (1997) assertion that it is proper and:

...legitimate to refer to a particular strand of mind that is quite peculiar to Africa and which shapes the prevailing conditions or permits itself to adapt to those conditions... (T)here is a distinctive feature about the African mind which seems to support the claim that the mind of black Africa may not necessarily operate in the same strict pattern as minds elsewhere in the world... (*But*) it is the way our mind functions and operates under certain conditions that we are able to arrogate to ourselves a particular status , social identification and geographical label (p.51-55).

The African perspective that I suggest with reference to Philosophy for Children involves situating the children in Africa within the context of their own cultural references to “...relate socially and psychologically to other cultural perspectives” (Asante, 1991, p. 171). To that end, this perspective seeks in every situation to allocate the African person the appropriate centrality (Asante, 1987). However, I hasten to stress that the African perspective in this regard does not endorse

ethnocentric valorisation at the cost of dismissing other perspectives of doing philosophy with children. I therefore propose an amalgamation of the Lipmanian and other models around the globe and the traditional African modes of doing philosophy with children to produce a 21st-century African perspective of Philosophy for Children.

I question the imposition of other perspectives, especially as and when they are viewed as “universal” and “classical”. Against this, I put forward a perspective that is African, relevant, valid and non-hegemonic. My view is premised on Kwame Gyekye’s³⁸ assertion that if a view is to be said to be African “...it (*should*) be extracted from the cultural, linguistic, and historical background of the African peoples...” (Gyekye, 1987, p. 42). While Gyekye is arguing for the retrieval of African tradition as the pioneering model of educational reconstruction and a positive starting point, it will not make sense to retrieve and preserve an African tradition that is dated, out of touch with the present-day developments and based, to a large extent, on questionable values. It would, however, equally be indefensible and practically unjustified not to refer to tradition “...since to all appearances there is certainly something to retrieve and preserve” (Ramose, 1992, p. 69).

The protagonists of the Western model might offer a suggestion of an African perspective that appropriates in its entirety the Western form of Philosophy for Children, since Western cultures have become part and parcel of many cultures in Africa, as will be discussed in Chapter 10. To some, this might sound quite plausible, since throwing it completely overboard will not assist Africa to restore its lost image. My case in this study is for a paradigmatic reconciliation of the two traditions (traditional and Western-modern) to produce a 21st-century African perspective of doing philosophy with children. Admittedly, African modernism is an invention of postcoloniality and is therefore filled with an overwhelming

³⁸ Note that Gyekye (1987) here is referring to modern African philosophy as starting from the background of the African people.

hybridity (Bhabha, 1996; Odora-Hoppers, 2001a), that is, the interweaving of the colonised and colonisers' cultural elements. After all, cultural systems can learn from each other, and each system, whether Western or non-Western, can influence the other. Besides, it is through viewing reality via the conceptual lenses of others that we come to realise our shared human experience. I agree with Reagan's (2005) proposition that an understanding of cultural plurality will also improve and correct the minds of those who believe in cultural superiority especially based on race. He writes, "An understanding of how other people have tried to educate their children... may help us think more clearly about some of our own assumptions and values... to help us to become more open to alternative viewpoints about important educational matters" (p. xi). One of the greatest challenges for my African perspective project is to provide a justifiable disjuncture of the modern as located in the universalist paradigm from that which is situated in the realm of the African particular. But, unless Africa has discovered what to do with modernity and established the relationship between tradition and modernity, then it would be indefensible to call for an African perspective of doing things.

Equally, when talking of an African perspective, one cannot avoid the discourse on the process of decolonisation. This process is usually modulated and associated with the politics of ethnicity, race, territoriality, citizenship and belonging (Kebede, 2011). At the heart of decolonisation are four central tenets. It is the realisation of the oppressive state that indigenous people existed in, thereby exposing a more realistic account of their history. In the process the oppressed indigenous people will discover the common enemy that creates(d) and maintains(ed) oppression. Decolonisation also revitalises a sense of nationality and recognises the knowledge and ways of indigenous ancestry. In addition, it fosters an understanding that citizens are a people in a nation sharing the same ancestry and, last, it recognises the strength of indigenous ways by exposing citizens to the truths of their history, thereby demystifying the fallacies and disinformation circulated by colonialism with regard to indigenous history, culture

and practices. In a nutshell, decolonisation is modern Africa's first self-directed project to attempt communal reclamation of African identity.

In Africa, as is the case in other parts of the world, philosophising takes place, and by implication there are philosophers who "...ask new questions, answer old questions in new ways and make important meta-philosophical contributions, (*and*) their work provides important critiques of Western philosophy, and also make available resources and models for indigenous philosophers in other cultures" (Vest, 2009, p. 3). I argue for an African perspective not only to showcase the importance of African contribution to the worldwide intellectual discourse of Philosophy for Children but also to critique the ways in which it was (and is still) done in traditional African communities. Despite the signifier "Africa" having been long used, as Mudimbe's (1988) argues, to "...justify the process of inventing and conquering and naming its 'primitives' or 'disorders...' as a subsequent means of its exploitation" (p.20), I propose the contemporary African perspective as a reconstructive field of inquiry that "...takes place in a dynamic in-between space in the always "contemporary" interstices dividing the past and the future" (Gratton, 2003, p. 64).

While I accept that Africa exists in the global village, my case for an African perspective is grounded in the thesis that Africa and Africans cannot be defined from "the outside", that is they have to do so themselves. My position, in this instance, is in concurrence with Phillip Nel's argument that the African self's identity, having been "...trampled upon and dislodged from its inherent cultural confines... is pleading for new identities and trends by stressing... African ways of thinking and doing as well as a restoration of African identity and pride" (Nel, 2005, p. 9). But, by taking such a standpoint we should not be subjecting ourselves to "cultural fixity"³⁹ (ibid, p.10). In addition, I agree with Kai Horsthemke who

³⁹ Here Nel is referring to Africans' demand for a reclamation of indigenous knowledge – what he calls "new forms of stereotyping indigenous Africa in essentialist ways" (see p.10)

advises us to take cautious steps “...against essentialism and divisiveness” (Horsthemke, 2009, p. 9).

My concern is not to engage in the power relations affair in which I am drawn to position my African perspective in the struggle between Western and African paradigms, especially with respect to the notion of Philosophy for Children in the 21st-century Africa. But, I argue that a case can be made for a model that can be said to be “African” that takes care of African conditions and whose existence and practices can also share with and be exported to other practices elsewhere around the globe. I owe due respect to the immense contribution and initiative of the late Matthew Lipman’s innovation of Philosophy for Children, as described in Part 2, as well as its manifestation, especially in the West. However, my take is that there is an African perspective of doing the same with some virtues inherited from African cultures, which are worth acknowledging and courting, and that can inform ways of doing Philosophy for Children in our present circumstances, as will be elucidated in Chapter 10. My case is underlined by the question: If Philosophy for Children has been adopted in schools in America, Europe, Asia and Australasia by situating it in those cultural and historical as well as geographical contexts, is it not possible to situate it in Africa too?

Understanding anything is more often than not associated with its environs, coupled with the customs and traditions, the languages and the daily practices of the people. To understand a particular perspective is not necessarily to be native to that tradition. Thus, in order to approach Africa, and to understand the people’s ways of life, there is a need “...to work hard to determine what is significant from the point of view of its people” (Bell, 2002, p. 1). To understand an African perspective of thought or action is to develop awareness, grasp and be attentive to the African modes of expression and to be able to translate those within one’s own language situation. The fundamental aspect is the ability to see and accommodate the *others’* categories and concepts that give expression to their life. Therefore, an African perspective of doing Philosophy for Children is a way of understanding how Philosophy for Children can be employed by using methods and techniques

that are informed by Africa's traditions, languages, thoughts and practices. But, to what extent is this view compliant with the language of universalism and globalisation?

In response to the above questions, I will argue in the affirmative while at the same time adopting a more cautious stride by calling for a hybrid approach. While philosophising starts from a people's existential circumstances, there are universal concepts that philosophers engage in their practice. Horsthemke and Enslin (2009), with reference to the educational practice of African philosophy of education, argue that doing philosophy from an African perspective would include, among other things, "...trying to come to grips with African educational issues and problems... to address pressing practical issues and problems" (Horsthemke & Enslin, 2009a, p. 212). To that end, one might argue that an African perspective of philosophising with children similarly "...will emerge from life experiences and, from the ways these are socially articulated... given that the life experiences of Africans on the African continent are commonly different from those of learners elsewhere..." (ibid, p. 212). Therefore, its aims, content and pedagogy will also take alternative approaches suited to the African existential conditions.

I agree with Gyekye's (1997) culturalist paradigm when he argues that human experience is mostly directly felt within some specific social or cultural context, and, as such, a people's thought is not worked out in a cultural or historical void. An African perspective, in essence, entails an active set of principles and forces that are shaped by and stimulated by the African people's unique roots and aspirations to know and inhabit their life-world. It is based on the role of Africans as subjects in the activity of doing philosophy rather than as "...Africans in the periphery of human thought and experience" (Mkabela, 2005, p. 179) and Africans as agents rather than as passive recipients. An African perspective should keep an eye on the contemporary African experience and, "... all must be done with a view to throwing light on the resolution of contemporary problems... [M]ore than anywhere else, contemporary Africa requires the nurturing of a

philosophical preoccupation that is relevant to the conditions of Africa” (Gbadegesin, 1991, p. 22). Despite the value of “localness” that the African perspective projects and its accompanying emergence from the African people’s different forms of social life, it does not follow, as a matter of necessity, that it is immune to external criticism (Horsthemke & Enslin, 2009a). The question then is: Does the African perspective of doing philosophy with children have to gaze at African’s past and its tradition to inform thought and practice in the 21st century?

Wamba dia Wamba argues that “...we must move away from the process of moving away from traditional society and internalising the colonial state” (Wamba-dia-Wamba, 1992, p. 73). But, while we need to look back to our African past, I challenge the assertion that *everything* in the pristine tradition of the people of Africa was perfect, and so it is necessary and proper to reengage that tradition now. Wamba puts forward the idea that traditional African and Western cultures are hostile positions to the point where they could not harmonise with each other. As a result, for him, it comes as no wonder that, to date, the Western values are seen to be superior to the traditional African ones. However, I do not necessarily endorse Wamba’s idea of an antithetical relationship between traditional African societies and the colonial state. Rather, I view the “*alien*” cultures as constituent and complementary parts of the African experience. It is dishonest, if not mischievous, to think and pretend that the 21st-century Africa can ignore other cultures for being “*alien*”. As Kwame Nkrumah recognises:

[while] African society must be treated as enjoying its own integrity, (and) its history must be a mirror of that society... the European contact must find its place in the history only as an African experience, even if as a crucial one. That is to say, European contact needs to be assessed and judged from the point of view of the principles animating African society, and from the point of view of the harmony and progress of this society (Nkrumah, 1970, p. 63).

Hence, I argue that an African perspective of doing things in the 21st century settles itself by: 1) not completely overhauling and throwing overboard the

centuries-old African traditions of social organisations (Diop, 1987; Williams, 1976); 2) the total and comprehensive abandonment of the European conqueror's educational paradigm (Ramose, 1992); 3) reconciliation of the radically opposed educational paradigms; and 4) the enlightened coexistence of the two paradigms. This draws me to the tradition-modernity debate. I will argue that there is a nexus between modernity and tradition in general and in Africa more specifically.

8.3 The Tradition-Modernity debate

Originating from the Latin verb “*tradere*”, which means to transmit or to give over, and the noun *traditio* — a process through which something is handed down, the term “tradition” represents an array of existing beliefs, practices, and modes of thinking inherited from the past. These may be used to guide and organise, as well as regulate, a people's ways of life to make meaning of their world. All people understand and construct their identities in terms of the traditions of which they are part (Kanu, 2003). Whatever the technological evolution, every human society dedicates substantial attention to conveying its cultural heritage to its young members. This has facilitated the cementing of social solidarity and has seen the continued endurance of societies over the ages. In this sense of the cultural traditions, and despite their neglect and efforts to dismantle them as lively processes, some traditions survive as fragments of value on the margins of their original contexts. On the other hand, some traditions persist at the centre, though they have to “...bear the cost of being rationalised by the state or commercialised by the market” (Fornas, 1995, p. 58). Other traditions persist more or less unharmed, though, basically, on the periphery of society, within a largely diminished space. In this section, I am most interested in those traditions that have been either neglected or dismantled, or both; those that continue to run on the margins as worthwhile fragments that deserve our courting in the present time. I argue that these contribute to the African perspective on “doing things”.

Discourses on modernity tend to draw our attention on *recent times*; the very present period in contrast to the more distant past (Mungwini, 2011). The Latin

word *modernus* implies “the present”, that which is “for the day”. *Modernus* is rooted in *modo*, meaning “of today”, “present” or “just now”. The basic assumption of the modernisation paradigm holds that modernisation occurs when traditional values, beliefs, and ways of doing things give way to innovative views and methods (Bhabha, 1994). The scheme of modernity is the reversal of the replication of traditions and other permanent structures of human or social life. Hence, modernity is often defined in terms of scientific development while tradition is regarded by many as embedded in backwardness and ignorance. For instance, Ciaffa (2008) looks at the scientific and technological development, dimension of modernity as represented by “...the emergence of science-based technologies that can be used to improve the basic conditions of human life” and the political dimension of modernity as the “development of political institutions that move away from authoritarian rule towards forms of government that enhance the liberty and welfare of all citizens” (Ciaffa, 2008, p. 122). Scientific thinking, defined as “...an analytic and systematic way of observing and interacting with the world that we observe around us... is often recognised as the hallmark of modernity...” (Olshin, 2007, p. 3). Spiritual and mystical beliefs are excluded from definitions of modern, rational systems, and are associated with the traditional. Hence, Hountondji’s call for a “clean break” with the premodern era to meet the demands of the present (Hountondji, 1996, p. 48). But, do traditional values and norms enhance or impede the process of scientific modernisation?

Situating on the foundational understanding of tradition and modernity in the context of Africa, one observes a conflictual picture of the two concepts, especially if considered in the cultural milieu. Modernity, for Africa, has established itself as the imposition of the economic, political, and cultural ideals of European Enlightenment’s on non-Europeans by subjugating African values in order to gain control and indoctrination. It must, however, be admitted even among and within African societies people tended to discriminate among the different aspects of foreign cultures they come into contact with and approved certain aspects while turning away others. It would be a falsity to claim that all Western enculturation of traditional Africans was coercive, since some saw the

advantage of going along with the new industrialisation and had the basic option between avoiding or pursuing some such goals themselves; in other words, to modernise or not. However, Curtin is of the view that, on the main, Africans proceeded with an “...early and uncritical approval of Western culture, followed by some form of neo-traditionalism” (Verma, 1991, p. 242). It is understandable to speak of an African perspective as a way of putting to the fore the traditional in the context of the modern — the view that “...we must go back to our roots in order to move forward – that is, we should reach back, and gather the best of what our past has to teach us, so that we can achieve our full potential as we move forward” (Fornas, 1995, p. 69). Such a revivalist thinking assumes that despite being unwritten, Africa has a timeless code of attitudes and values that have persisted for centuries, which the contemporary era can mobilise to confront current challenges. This again draws us to the contentious questions of: Who and what is African? In particular, which past is African and, consequently whose past do we intend to revive? Are we not falling into the trap of what Horsthemke (2009) has referred to as the “fallacy of the collective singular” in which we tend to ignore the rich and diverse cultures, perspectives and ways of thinking on which Africa is founded (Curtin, 1972, p. 5).

The “traditional African” version of doing things is sometimes referred to as “...the wholesale, uncritical, nostalgic acceptance of the past — of tradition” (Gyekye, 1997), typified by “...the absence of visions of alternatives” (Kanu, 2007, p. 154), while “modern” is usually associated with Western origins, progress and development. But it is a truism that science as an endeavour and a phenomenon cannot be conceived in a cultural vacuum, and so it is “...greatly influenced by the prevailing cultural traits and a worldview of a people such as their social values, priorities, ideas, skills, ethics, perception of social reality and belief systems” (Inokoba, Adebawale, & Perepregabofa, 2010, p. 23). Modern advancement in technology arises, in the main, as an illustration of the already present cultural values. From the point of view of a deep conception of tradition, every society in our modern world is “traditional” in as much as it maintains and cherishes values, practices, outlooks and institutions conferred to it by previous

generations (Gyekye, 1997) and all or much of which it takes pleasure in and pride of, and builds on. There is truth in the assertion that “...every society in modern world inherits ancestral cultural values implies that modernity is not always a rejection of the past...” (Gyekye, 1997, p. 217). In this sense, it is inappropriate to perceive tradition and modernity as opposites but rather as complementary elements with tradition acting as the springboard on which modernity begins. In other words, the modern can be said to be a development of tradition. Hence, it is unjustifiable for the modernists to rubbish tradition since all modernity and so the 21st-century African perspective cannot be worth its name without reference to its traditional past.

To view an African perspective of doing philosophy as a backward gaze of an outmoded tradition in the 21st century would be a false interpretation of the relationship between tradition and modernity, with respect to the education of young members of our society. No human culture totally refuses to take advantage of the potential profits of change. To subscribe to the revivalist perspective is to accept that authentic modernisation in Africa can only materialise through the revitalisation of African key cultural norms, values and beliefs. A total rejection of the worth of Africa’s products of a cultural past merely on the basis of its existence in the past would be irrational as “...cultural nostalgia is a universal phenomenon” (Oke, 2006, p. 341) though I also question Africans’ tendency to be uncritical about their traditional ways of life. The African perspective of Philosophy for Children that I am proposing should not be a blind, unreflective and patronising retention of traditional ways of doing “philosophy with children”, under the same description. The revival of some cultural ways of doing “philosophy with children”, under the same description, in Africa’s traditional past by adapting them to suit present generations would certainly give it an African perspective.

The gap between the cultural revivalists and their critics revolves, in large part, around the contrasting understanding of modernity and modernisation. For revivalist thinkers such as Shutte (2003), the goal of an African perspective is to

mobilise African tradition to address contemporary problems to “...rediscover and resume our proper selves” (Shutte, 2003, p. 181). Hence, the revivalist school seeks to decolonise Africa by asserting that a careful re-examination of African culture will address questions about modernisation, citing the traditional use of medicinal herbs, advanced agricultural methods, and methods of food preservation⁴⁰ as forms of scientific knowledge that are equivalent to modern science. However, I argue that, while there might be some common elements of science in pre-colonial and postcolonial Africa, there are some serious conflicts between traditional modes of thought and the scientific aspect of modernisation. As Ciaffa writes, “...we cannot ignore the glaring gap between scientific development in the West and Africa... due in part to traditional ways of thinking about the natural world” (Ciaffa, 2008, p. 130). While the gap is a reality, and can be attributed, at least in part, to historical circumstances, there is no justification to hold that this is a sign of a sharp difference between Western and African minds⁴¹. The African perspective that I argue for is one that does not propose mimicry of Western forms of thinking as evidence of superior mindsets, but rather one that positions African thoughts at the centre, geared towards the specific challenges of African societies, including poverty, ignorance, disease, war and unresolved ethnic conflicts.

Traditional cultures and practices in Africa, just as those elsewhere around the globe, should negotiate the difficult tightrope walk between benefits of modern scientific thinking and the price of the loss of traditional ways of living. The question is: What form should the African perspective of doing philosophy with children take in the 21st-century Africa: the traditional or the modern? The African perspective I propose acknowledges a meeting of tradition and modernity, which Olshin describes within the realm of four possible scenarios:

⁴⁰ See Owomoyela (1991, pp. 173-175)

⁴¹ See Wiredu (1995)

1. The modern society incorporates elements of traditional cultures
2. There is an attempted complete synthesis of the two systems, where elements of the traditional culture are consciously preserved in a society that is otherwise modernising
3. The traditional culture rejects scientific thinking and modernity, and there is an overt clash
4. The traditional culture wholly adopts scientific thinking and modernity; even in this case, the traditional beliefs and practices do not disappear – they are unconsciously preserved and suppressed and appear in different forms (Olshin, 2007, p. 23).

In the case of an Africa perspective, 1 and 2 dominate what I would propose as the traditional African model for doing philosophy with children. While the two might struggle to coexist, the duality of modernity and tradition is arguably here to stay. As indicated earlier, modernity feeds from tradition that came prior to the modern. With progress, the modern becomes a product of innovation and change that has taken place in the tradition of a people or a culture.

The point of the African perspective of doing philosophy with children that I raise is to emphasise traditional African modes of philosophising often “condemned as irrational and backward..., (*thereby*) ...shaping a unique African modernity” (Viriri & Mungwini, 2010, p. 39). This implies that there are questions about an African modernity, given that “modern” has been situated in Western civilisation. I agree with Gyekye (1997), who allocates to Africa a unique and distinct modernity as evidenced by differences between Africans on the continent and those in the diaspora. My definition of an African perspective of modernity concurs with Viriri & Mungwini’s, who write that it is “...modernity experienced by Africans... it involves how Africans have interacted with and, at the same time, transformed Western modernity as they shaped their own lived experiences” (Viriri & Mungwini, 2010, p. 39). It would be narrow-minded not to recognise the fact that “modern” practices are subsumed in a variety of ways by indigenous cultural milieus of Africa and integrated within their traditions. It is also a truism that “...a

defining characteristic of the modern scientific canon is the way that it *defies* integration and assimilation with non-Western systems of knowledge” (Lauer, no date).

Gyekye (1997) cautions against developing an attitude of praising the cultural past in its entirety, since “...not every aspect of a cultural past – not every cultural product of the past – ought to be revived and given a place in the scheme of things in the present” (Gyekye, 1997, p.239). He further argues that it “...would be otiose, meaningless and irrelevant if tradition were *merely transmitted*” (ibid, p.221). According to this view, a mere handing down implies that a culture accepts that what worked in the previous generations should equally be relevant to the present; a situation which is pragmatically unsound and, indeed, unrealistic. Hence, Gyekye cited traditional African thoughts and practices that include superstitious beliefs, belief in witchcraft, ancestorship and the negatives of the communitarian ethos, such as the inheritance systems and the patronage that comes with the extended family system. To this end, he proposes that for Africa to move forward scientifically and technologically, “science should be rescued from the morass of (traditional) African religious and mystical beliefs” (Gyekye, 1996a, p. 174). I argue for an African perspective of Philosophy for Children that is selective in the resuscitation of Africa’s cultural products of the past. Besides, Africa should chart its future from its indigenous cultural traditions, and adopt and adapt only those aspects of non-African cultures that are compatible with Africa’s needs, goals and circumstances — that is, a scientific perspective and Western educational practices.

I am aware that the particularism of the African perspective of doing philosophy with children that I propose needs to be offset and contextualised by perspectives that emphasise cross-cultural similarities. If not, as James Lassiter argues, “...the evils of cultural stereotypes, ethnocentrism and bigotry spawned by past culture... will be replaced by particularism’s negative outcomes of greater cultural exclusivity, arrogance, intolerance, xenophobia, mistrust,...” (Lassiter, 2000, p. 12). The future of Africa can only be forged from accepting and mending the

socio-cultural present. Mugambi observes that “...the effects of westernisation are here to stay and the faster we adapt to living with them the better for us and the generations to come” (Appiah, 1991, p. III). I think Mugambi is partly correct in insisting that the solutions to Africa’s problems and its future are not to be found only in Africa’s traditional past. I also acknowledge that Africa cannot remain stuck in the roots and remain quiet about the demands and challenges of modernity. But, the African perspective cannot do away entirely with the essential and positive values on which African tradition is founded. There are some values that have had a positive effect and have sustained African livelihood to this day and at the same time have resisted enculturalisation imposed from outside. Hence, I see no justifiable cause to do away with such virtues, all in the interest of serving “modernity”. After all, “...philosophical thought of a traditional (i.e. preliterate and non-industrialised) society may hold some lessons of moral significance for a more industrialised society” (Wiredu, 1992, p. 52). Besides, to doubt that traditional Africa has something of value not only for African, but also for humanity at large, may be unsound if we accept that all cultures are equally valuable and interdependent in some way or the other. Hence, an argument for an African perspective of doing philosophy with children is proposing a philosophy that is not only for Africa and particular to Africa, but rather a philosophy that serves humankind and is universal.

The modernity and tradition debate in the context of the African perspective of Philosophy for Children will be incomplete without considering the distinctive components of people inhabiting the present-day Africa. In *Personality and person perception in Africa* (2002), Karl Peltzer discusses three types of persons with reference to sub-Saharan Africa: 1) traditional persons who are little affected by modernisation; 2) transitional persons; and 3) modern individuals (Peltzer, 2002b). Even in 21st-century Africa, there still are traditional persons who are little influenced by modernisation and, in that respect, are operating within the realm of their customary and apparently changeless culture. We also find transitional people, as Peltzer (1995) writes, “...often living in, and shuttling between, the two cultures in the course of their daily round of activities, for example, between work

and home or between the temporary urban-living dwelling and the ancestral traditional village where the extended village continues to reside” (Peltzer, 1995, p. 25). The last category is the modern individuals who participate fully in the activities of the contemporary industrial and post-industrial world and who have little or no contact with traditional customs and cultural practices. The above categories also differentiate children as they are raised and socialised into adult members of their respective classes. With the provision of a more modernised (Western) form of education, some children, who now constitute the majority in Africa, are moving up the social ladder to join the “*transitional*” category and progressively some will surpass the middle group and reside in the modern category. This last category of the young generation almost never debates the significance of tradition in Africa in the traditional milieu and often associates tradition with a difficult life and a gloomy future. Issues of traditional values and ways of life in Africa are of concern primarily to rural people while the opposite holds true of urban settings. This, once again, and as alluded to earlier, invites the question of who or what is “*African*”? The very presence of the three classes is not unproblematic in discourses on doing philosophy with children from an African perspective. The questions then become:

- 1) Who is the African child under discussion — the traditional, the transitional or the modern?
- 2) What form of Philosophy for Children would be said to be appropriate for the African child? and following from the above,
- 3) Can traditional ways of philosophising with children enter the present modes of doing Philosophy with Children in Africa?

8.4 Summary and Critique

The overall impression one might get from the discussion in this chapter is that an African perspective is about reclaiming what Africa has been robbed of by *Africanising* all that Africa is, from economic and social to political institutions. In effect, this process is at the heart of what I claim an African perspective to be. I

am aware of the critique of the *Africanisation* agenda, among them Horsthemke's (2004) who, although appreciating that such views "emphasise relevance", criticise the proposal for evoking "...a false or at least a superficial sense of belonging..." and, more important, "...for being "...hazardously close to a comprehensive relativism" (p. 571). But it is my case that by proposing an African perspective, I am not suggesting the expulsion of other cultures that are not African, but am projecting ways of doing things in Africa that include all cultures – traditional African and non-African. All that I acknowledge is that processes that can be said to have adopted an African perspective should be informed by the African experience. As noted earlier, I recognise that we should not refer to Africa and African tradition as one homogeneous, collective unit with a single culture. However, we cannot ignore that there are more common strands and threads that run across African cultures than we would find when we compare them with cultures from other continents.

Yes, I acknowledge there are certain universals that have no human cultural boundaries. For instance, when we say man is a rational animal, we assert that humankind as a whole shares certain common elements, without which they lose the definition of human. We should also recognise, however, that it is only the levels of reasonableness, in this example, that may differ from culture to culture or race to race, though the structure of the human mind may essentially be the same, since all human beings in all cultures have an equal capacity to reason. The case for an African perspective offers a new orientation among scholars on Africa, both those seeking to position the 21st-century Africa in traditional philosophy and those demanding a new /modern social order. There is a need for them to begin searching from within the cultural base of the indigenes of Africa for them to be conceptually decolonised. It is by amalgamating *some* of their intellectual borrowings into the African tradition so that they can legitimately preface their thoughts and practices as "African".

The notion of an African perspective re-establishes the perennial dialogues between the particular and the universal with the latter refusing to accept the

existence of the politics of difference and the potential of more numerous alternatives. As alluded to earlier, African societies constitute many cultures and, as Gutmann (1995) affirms, “...it is morally wrong and empirically false to teach students as if it were otherwise” (n.p.). Given the multicultural societies in Africa, an African philosophy of education and, hence, an African perspective of doing Philosophy with Children should aim to recognise the social contributions and life experiences of the diverse groups that make up African societies. However, such a perspective should avoid the cultivation of what Gutmann calls “the separatist cultural identities” (ibid) in the name of the reinforcement the self-esteem of the learners. In the same vein, the African perspective, just like Afrocentrism, should guard against stressing in children the superior accomplishments of their ancestors, since this leads to racial discrimination. Hence, an African perspective of a democratic Africa would take a cue from Gutmann’s proposal that an authentic curriculum would include “...the achievements of Africa and Africans, ancient and modern... alongside the treatment of other continents and peoples, and in which the links (causal , cultural and emotional) between the history of Africa and the history of (*other peoples*)... *are made plain*” (Gutmann, 1995).

Gutmann also provides a summative evaluation of the unresolved binary between the particularist and the universalist views as she writes, the problems of unregulated particularism are the mirror image of those confronting a universalism that tries to transcend particularist cultures. While transcendent universalism expects “...too much uniformity in the content of public schooling, separatist particularism expects too little” (Dhawan, 2005, p. 131). Hence, the African perspective, while hoping to serve African conditions and priorities should check against narrow parochialism, which hinders members from developing a universal and cosmopolitan outlook, which characterises the global world of which Africa is part. An African perspective should recognise that philosophising is not only about what is particular to Africa, but should rather appreciate African lives in a world of shared citizenship; hence the need to develop the “...intellectual curiosity about people who happen to live in other societies” (Gutmann, 1995, n.p.).

However, to deny that there can be an African perspective is to refute the presence of the particular, the indigenous and the promise of difference.

Africa remains Africa, despite the various influences it has been exposed to over the ages. The “African”, whether colonised, evangelised, or “educated”, still has something authentically African in him or her. The survival of African entities and institutions has been propped up by this authentically African trait. In the process, it has proved difficult for most people from other cultures to fully appreciate and understand the African. The folklore, myth, sooth sayings, religion, education, sociopolitical organisations and other aspects of African cultures relevant to African needs may form the material, the content and subject of philosophy for children in the context of Africa. This does not suggest an inflexible fondness for models used in appraising African culture itself; instead, it is through critical and creative appraisal as well as consistent and coherent methodologies which are unique to Africa. The African perspective I am proposing is an open-minded approach to different paradigms of doing philosophy with children with a focus and centrality on the African person in the 21st century. However, contributions from other parts of the globe are adopted and adapted to suit the African child in the new millennium, since “the central reference point of a value system is the individual and the society” (Chinweizu, 1987). It is African in that it attends to problems which arise in the context of African experience. Without over-romanticising the African perspective of doing things, I propose the purposive goal of developing in all participants on African affairs a deep sense of pride in their Africanness. As will be discussed below the African perspective of doing philosophy with children will, among other things, include the use of the mother tongue, be based on the African worldview, and include Africa’s contribution to world civilisation and the various forms of African creativity. Due cognisance shall be given to the fact that there can exist historical-cultural products and practices, especially thought systems that are universally justifiable and, indeed, universally valid, unlike other, competing systems; thus the call for a synthesis of traditional African and estern modes of doing philosophy with children. Hence, the African perspective proposed in the context of this chapter is a paradigm shift

from a perspective that, since colonisation, has devalued traditional Africa's potential in the sociopolitical and economic spheres to one that centres on African traditional values and incorporates values from other cultures.

My case for an African perspective of doing philosophy with children will be framed in and buttressed by Wiredu's (1992) thesis that:

African philosophers are active today to achieve a synthesis of the philosophical insights of their ancestors with whatever they can extract of philosophical worth from the intellectual resources of the modern world... they are also reflecting on their languages and cultures in an effort to exploit their philosophical intimations. Besides... they are trying to grapple with questions in such areas as logic, epistemology, and philosophy of science, which are not raised in their culture... It is in this way... that a tradition of modern philosophy can blossom in Africa (p. 61).

The above is supported by Gyekye's (1995) approach to a philosophical tradition in Africa as he notes:

I believe that in many areas of thought we can discern features of traditional life and thought of African peoples sufficiently common to constitute a legitimate and reasonable basis for the construction (or reconstruction) of a philosophical system that may properly be called African — African not in the sense that every African adheres to it, but in the sense that that philosophical system arises from, and hence is essentially related to, African life and thought. Such a basis would justify a discourse in terms of "African philosophy" (p. 191).

Thus the African perspective that I argue for is one that considers Philosophy for Children as an intellectual enterprise that engages children in Africa with African reality, that is, the very situation in Africa, including the way of life, the experiences and relations. It is about tapping indigenous African philosophies,

resources and raw materials on which to found the 21st-century African educational philosophies by using the past to reveal the future.

In sum, I have argued that the conflict between the particular and the universal, the unresolved tension between modernity and the challenges of decolonisation and nation building, though largely conceptual, speak a lot to the definition of an African perspective. A 21st-century African perspective of doing things cannot avoid revaluing Africa's relationship with the modernity project by resolving the tensions and contradictions between aspects of African tradition that are in conflict with modernity. If Africa is to maintain its Africanness, then there is a need for any African perspective to upgrade and refashion the dimensions and institutions of modernity to serve local needs. I am aware of critics who will present arguments against the African perspective, having themselves been schooled in certain orthodox ways of doing Philosophy with Children, and who will not appreciate the views from "Africa" as authentic arguments that can make worthwhile contributions to the global discipline of Philosophy for Children. My challenge is that the practice of Philosophy for Children is not fixed to a particular cultural and geographical source. It is not unidirectionally transferable from those sources to others. Africa must decide its way with regard the nature of the relationship with modernity, given the new global interdependence. An environment in which individual talents and dispositions have the chance of being fully developed is what a postcolonial African would expect to live in. The questions that will need to be addressed include: What can traditional African philosophy offer to Philosophy for Children in Africa in the 21st century? That is, what virtues are worth courting for inclusion? The above questions are the topical issues that inform the next two chapters.

Chapter 9 *Ukama* in Africa — a contribution to Philosophy for Children

9.1 Introduction

Societies in Africa, as elsewhere, in order to constitute systematic and functioning human communities, have ethical values, principles and standards that are meant to guide the social and moral behaviour of their peoples. I will argue that Africa has a treasure chest of insight to offer the world in relation to humanness, as alluded to in Biko's (1978) sentiments that "...the contribution to the world by Africa will be in the field of human relationship... a great gift... (*of*) giving the world a more human face" (p. 46). The ethics of traditional African communities are the ethics of small-scale communities characterised by codependence and a strong sense of cooperation, communalism and work towards mutual gain. Stressing the sociality of traditional African, Temples posits that "the Bantu cannot be a lone being... (and) every being forms a link in a chain of vital forces, a living link..." (Temples, 1959, p. 114). One such way of characterising the interactions in such communities is in terms of relationships and relationality. Placide Temples first exposed to the Western audience *Ukama* in the African worldview when he wrote that the concept of "...separate beings which find themselves side by side, entirely independent of one another, is foreign to Bantu thought" (Temples, 1959, p. 773). This collective template centres around respect based on age, rank, self-control and the balancing of individual rights with groups demands; responsibility which requires working hard with others in favour of their security; and reciprocity through which generous acts are returned. Based on these and other African conceptions, I articulate in this chapter an African perspective of Philosophy for Children based on the notion of *ukama*.

I claim in this chapter that it is in the holistic, communitarian and humanistic worldview that the ethic of ukama, among the Shona in particular and among the Africans in general, manifests itself. To appreciate the notion of ukama I propose that there is a need to understand its connection to, as well as its significance for the complementary notions of self, agency as well as personal identity. In addition, the notions of humanity, dignity and respect, and the interplay between them (Bell, 2002) help us clarify our understanding of ukama. Phrases such as relational self (Piot, 1999) or relational individualism (Shaw, 2000) are not uncommon in social discourses to describe implicit constructions of self in the African context. I will argue that the notion of ukama is enshrined in the broader philosophy of Ubuntu given that the latter:

- Is humanity towards others
- The belief in a universal bond of sharing that connects all humanity
- Holds that persons are persons through their interrelatedness in community
- Is understood in the sense of availability and openness to the other

While I will not delve much into the ubuntu worldview, I admit that it will be inadequate to isolate the two entirely in a discourse such as this one. The Bantu maxim '*Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*' in IsiZulu and, in ChiShona, '*Munhu munhu navanhu*' and often translated into English as, "a person is a person through other persons" (Ramose, 1999; Shutte, 1993), best summarises the Ukama ethic that I will examine.

The chapter has a limited scope. Rather than engaging in the particulars about the meaning, nature and purpose of concept of human community as such, the focus shall be on showing the nature of the relationship that exists between the individual and community in the African world with special reference to the ethic of Ukama. To do this, I employ the traditional Shona worldview on community and humanity, as characteristic principles of the African view on that aspect of human relationship. I chose the Shona culture as the basis of my analysis not on grounds of the belief in the supposed supremacy of Shona culture over other African cultures, but for mere convenience, given my own Shona background and upbringing. I am conscious there is a problem of banding together into a single whole the countless opinions Africans hold

on the different aspects of reality, experiences and priorities. One way to respond to these charges is to remind ourselves that cultures are neither wholly particularistic nor are they completely independent in nature (Agulanna, 2007). On the contrary, there are some elements in culture referred to as “cultural universals”, or what John Bowker has identified as the “recurring elements, in human behaviour, which arise as a consequence of the fact that we are all conceived and born in, broadly speaking, the same way” (Bowker, 1991, p. 18). For instance, while Africans may differ with respect to some elements of their cultures, they nonetheless have in common aspects that are in universal nature.

In this chapter, I examine the common or shared features of *ukama* in the moral life and thought of various African societies by exploring the Shona cultural practices and thought systems as a point of departure. However, I will also draw some illustrations and inferences from other cultures in Africa for purposes of comparing and contrasting the issues I explore. As I discuss the notion of *ukama*, I cannot avoid asking the following pertinent questions: 1) what is the role of the individual in a human community? 2) Does the community take precedence over the individual members who constitute it? and 3) Can the individual exist and survive outside the social setting in which he/she exists and lives? As I give attention to these questions, I will show that *ukama* is a central process in the context of Philosophy for Children, as well as the vital end product that it seeks to achieve. Hence, what is pertinent in this chapter is:

- What, if anything, does the African conception of *ukama* contribute to our understanding of Philosophy for Children, not only in Africa, but also globally?
- Is there anything distinct and unique about *ukama* as an African perspective that can be offered to Philosophy for Children?
- What is the uniqueness of the ethic of *ukama* in the Africa worldview vis-a-vis human relationships in the community of inquiry as postulated in the Lipmanian model of Philosophy for Children?

- To what extent are the two conceptions, *ukama* and the community of inquiry, complementary or in conflict, especially for the 21st-century child in Africa?

I claim that *ukama* is both constructive and critical in the community of inquiry as pedagogy of doing Philosophy with Children in Africa.

9.2 The concept of *ukama*

In its etymological sense, *ukama* is a Shona adjective whose root stem is *hama*, meaning “relative”. The first letter, *u*, becomes the adjectival prefix and *kama* is the adjectival stem (Murove, 2007b). The word *kama* on its own means to milk an animal and the notion of milking in the Shona culture implies closeness and affection (Murove (2009). As Mhaka (2010) adds, “...milking suggests a connection between the source, the means of livelihood and the beneficiaries” (p. 20). The *kama* part of *ukama* is indicative of a *hama* (relative). Gelfand (1981) explains this notion: “In essence Ukama is a brotherhood [sic] in which members of the group share with one another and find peace through love of all in the extended family, or clan” (p. xi). The Shona aphorism “*Wako ndewako kuseva unosiya muto*” (literally meaning “when feeding, even with very little relish or soup (in your plate), you will always remember to leave some for your relative”), best reminds people of the value not only to share in times of scarcity, but also the value of Ukama as relationality; that as relatives we should remember each other’s needs in times of crisis. I therefore posit *ukama*, in the African sense, as *a universal bond of sharing that connects all humanity* (Ndungane, 2012, p. 24).

Ukama can best be traced in the unity of the family. While it is a universal reality, especially in most traditional societies, that family is the basic unit of society, the traditional African notion of family is unique in that it covers not only the husband, wife and children, but also includes all living members of the extended family, the ancestors and outsiders related to them through marriages and friendships. As pointed earlier on, this mode of integration of members is different from the Western view with the traditional African set-up giving priority to the community of others before the

individual. This goes to stress bondedness and relationality of traditional Africa based on the notion of family.

The traditional African family thus determines the behaviour of individuals, with the family providing most elaborate rules that govern the operations of the unit and the individuals in it. The strength of the family is achieved through the close relationships that exist between the living and the departed spirits who provide protection, support and guidance to the living. The question then is the relevance of the African “family” in terms of relationship in *heterogeneous* communities. African life is based on the vitality of human beings and the relationships that exist in the specific circumstances of life. To that end, *ukama* in Shona means relationality, relatedness or relationships of people or things that share some bonds or commonalities. *Ukama* represents the conviction that reality is inherently relational. The notion of African *self* engaged the dialectics linking the individual and members of one’s community — a dialectical interpenetration of the individual and the community. However, this relatedness is further realised in the context of ubuntu, since “...in ubuntu the individual is indelibly associated with the community, and can only flourish in *ukama* within the community” (De Quincey, 2005, p. 203). The notion of *ukama*, in the final analysis, can best be understood in the context of Murove (1999) conception as he writes, “An ethic of *ukama* is an ethic of holism. It is holistic in the sense that my well-being as an individual has its ontological meaning in relationship to my fellow human beings, those that are still alive, ancestors, God, and the environment...” (p. 84).

The relational constructions in the African worldview do not separate the particles but rather regard the selves as fundamentally interconnected beings – each connected not only to other people, that is the living relatives and the departed ancestors, but also to place, spiritual forces and a sense of built-in order (Fiske, 1991; Tengan, 1991). This implies that *ukama* is “...an ethic that arises from a civilisation sensitised to relatedness among all that exists...” and that “...the African person can only be understood as a being characterised by interrelationships” (Bujo, 2009, p. 285). Among the Shona, *ukama*, as is the case in most traditional African societies, forms “a boundless human web” (Ackermann, 1998, p. 17) in which individuals acquire their humanity as a gift or

present cultivated and moulded in and through the humanity of others. To that end, “the sense of being connected, bounded in one common life, informs human relationships and defines behavioural patterns” (Sindima, 1995, p. 127). I must point out at this juncture that, in my branding the *ukama* ethic “African”, I do not imply that it is unique to the geographical location of Africa, but that it presents itself more prominently in Africa than it does everywhere else. Ukama is grounded in what Prozesky (2007) refers to as “...beneficence — (*that is, the*) active concern for the good of others” (p.131). All societies accept this universal principle essential for true and enduring well-being though Africans will go a step further to stress that all existence, including being human, can best be understood and interpreted in the context of symbiosis with others. While critics argue against traditional African values as impeding human development and modernisation, as discussed earlier in Chapter 8, I find the *ukama* ethic pervading and transcending these challenges. I will argue that the notion of *ukama* proffers an original means of making sense of the community of inquiry in Philosophy for Children.

9.3. The Ukama ethic in the African worldview

The ethic of *ukama* is based on the idea that a human being is ontologically and cosmologically a relational being (Murove, 2007a) and is “...only a person in, with, and through not just other people but also in, with, and through the natural environment” (Murove, 1999, p.10). This also presupposes interpersonal and intercommunity relationship realised in the interaction between individuals of the same community and different communities. Gelfand (1973) acknowledges that:

The Shona have clear concepts of the virtues and vices and they have much to say about the aberrations of personality. So they have a definite idea of what constitutes behaviour in their society and its importance. Good relations between one man and another are bound to suffer if one should commit an antisocial act (p. 52).

The purpose of morality is to improve “*munhu*” (being) rooted in “*hunhu*” (good character). The traditional Shona accept as true that morality adds to the celebrated end

of self-fulfilment. In daily practice, *munhu ane hunhu* (a well-cultivated being) is conceived as possessing the outlook to act ethically. He/she would display *tsika dzakanaka* (virtuous behaviour), thus names like *Mwanakwaye* (well-behaved child) are not uncommon among the Shona. In addition, we find among the Shona the aphorism: *Murombo munhu* (Even the poor is a person, too). *Chembere ndeyeimbwa yemunhu ndibaba vevana* (One can only talk to *very old age* when referring to an old dog or some animal but when referring to human beings even the very old should be referred to as “father of the family”). The above go to explain the dignity beings accord to other beings by virtue of their humanity. As a result, the Shona uphold the following virtues as fundamental for community life:

Kunzwanana' (mutual understanding, harmony)

'Kugarisana' (peaceful coexistence)

Kuwadzana' (fellowship)

Hushamwari' (friendship)

Kudyidzana' (this word captures the idea of mutual hospitality and reciprocity), and *'Mushandirapamwe'* (co-operation and togetherness) (Chimuka, 2001)

The concepts above communicate central values whose utility is to enhance behavior in the community and the common thread that runs across them is an emphasis on human relationships — *ukama*. Although De Quincey (2005) is not specific to the Shona thoughts and practices, the long quote below could be used to demonstrate the ethic of Ukama and sums up the Shona virtues listed above:

...we are definitely not alone... we don't form relationships, they form us. We are constituted by webs of interconnection. Relationship comes first, and we emerge as more or less distinct centres within the vast and complex networks that surround us. In this new view, we are noted in the complex web of life. Each of us is a meeting point, a centre of convergence, for countless threads of relationship. We are moments in time and locations in space where the universe shows up –

literally, as a phenomenon (from the Greek *phainomenon*, “to appear” or “to show”). In other words, in this “new story” we emerge as subjects from intricate networks of interrelatedness, from webs of inter-subjectivity (p.182).

The notion of community is the core of traditional African thinking about humanity and human relationships grow outwards from the nuclear family, to the extended family including neighbours. In addition, among the Shona, one does not automatically become one’s neighbour until you both find *ukama* and, as such, a neighbour is defined in the context of “...anyone who shares life and boundaries with other people in the community” (Mhaka, 2010, p.24). To stress neighbourliness, the Shona would say “*Ukama makore hunopfekana*”, literally meaning that relationships are can be likened to clouds; they interpenetrate. It is within this template of relatedness that the values of sharing, love, respect, unity and continuity are oriented. I now turn to the key tenets of *ukama* in greater detail.

9.3.1 *Ukama* as harmony

The maintenance of harmony and equilibrium in the wholeness of creation is of fundamental importance in the African worldview. This is the principle of harmony or balance (Myers, 1988) and the “orderedness of being”⁴² (Karenga, 2004b, p. 191). To maintain harmony in creation, one must seek to show respect to all the living (both the seen and the dead – the ancestors). In other words, the Shona give high reverence not only to the being of the living humans, but also to the dead as the latter are said to be living in the spirit world. The sociality of traditional African humanity is sustained and expressed through the extended family system coupled with a highly structured kinship network. In other words, there exists a detailed and harmonious relationship matrix, which is highly valued. The notion of harmony in the African worldview, though comprehensive and abstract, “conceives of balance in terms of the totality of the relations that can be maintained between and among human beings... between human

⁴² Karenga (2004a) discusses the African cosmology as God’s process of creation consisting of ordering existence from an unstructured or unordered reality to an orderly and harmonious state of being.

beings and physical nature” (Ramose, 2009, p. 309). Traditional Africans say *kugara kunzwanana* (“staying together and embracing each other’s differences is survival on this planet”) to stress the value of living together through understanding and tolerating each other. Thus, the Shona believe that *kana pasina kunzwanana pakati pavanhu hapana rugare* (literally, “if there is no understanding among the people there cannot be any peace”). The idea of order among the Shona also pervades the general African worldview. For example, one can be said to have good health or an absence of it only as far as one strikes a good balance and harmony between oneself and the social milieu. Disharmony or a breakdown in social relations with one’s community both of the living and the ancestral beings culminates in disease or illness. This harmonious balance is the foundation of the *ukama* ethic as demonstrated through reverence of, caring and empathy for others. For the traditional Africans, life is only meaningful if reference is made to the social and physical interdependence. As Prozesky (2009) explains, “Individual efforts are important for themselves but far more when networked with others of similar values and commitment” (p.305). The thrust of *ukama as group harmony is community concerns relationship*.

In addition, Bujo (2001) writes of the *ukama* bond with the ancestors. He says, “African ethics are articulated in the framework of anamnesis, which involves remembering one’s ancestors” (p.34) to demonstrate *ukama*’s call for a harmonious bond between the past, the present and the future. The living among the Shona strive to the limit to ensure they live in harmony with other beings in their community who share ancestry with them in order to ascertain that all goes well for them and their families, moreover their character will be good. A life of relationship in harmony among the Shona extends to one’s neighbours by demonstrating one’s readiness to understand and forgive in time of misfortunes thereby, demonstrating *kuwirirana* (good neighbourliness). It comes as no wonder that traditional Africans mourn *together*, celebrate *together* and work *together*, and are *together* in times of need. Thus, as Gelfand (1973) concluded, “ the imperatives of the Shona culture might... be reduced to the three guide lines: ‘live together’, ‘keep the peace’ and ‘multiply’” (p. 102). However, for the Shona to treat the failure to multiply as a moral deviation may be challenged especially in times of overpopulation and the limited resources. So, the average Shona would, at best, work towards

maintaining *ukama* qua harmony. An individual is perceived not only as the centre of the relationship, but also as an active participant contributing to its sustenance. One thus lives in harmony in as far as one relates not only to people, but to almost everything else. Hence, life is incomplete and inadequate without one's fellows and one needs the support of the community and feels normal only when one is in relationship with it. As will be shown later, *ukama* as harmony is the survival imperative of the community of inquiry when doing philosophy with children.

9.3.2 *Ukama* as a cooperative endeavour

Based on the holistic conception of life traditional Africans hold about the cosmic unity between God, ancestors plants and animals and other inanimate objects, mutual sharing and cooperative participation in community with others are cherished values. This is based on the African understanding that “all beings, organic or inorganic, living and (*non-living*), personal or impersonal, visible and invisible – act together to manifest the universal solidarity of creation” (Bujo, 2009, p. 282) [emphasis mine]. Even knowing is a relational act (Mkhize, 2008). Thus, among the Shona to know something, one has to participate cooperatively in a dynamic process involving mutual sharing with others, since knowledge is the preserve of the community. The Shona *saykuziva mbuya huudzwa*, literally “to know someone worth respecting and dignified like the mother-in-law, you have to be *told*”. In other words, it is the community that knows. Unlike the subjects in the Hobbesian state of nature, who, in their individual capacity stand alone, unattached to define themselves as solitary, the African subjects define themselves in the context of the quality of participation they offer to the community. Among the traditional Africans, being human is a social practice that demands one to work communally with others. Thus, one has an obligation to work with others and, to know, it is a matter of “*together* we share and *together* we think”. Hence, irrespective of the contestations that emanate from the traditional African notion of togetherness (among them its denial to allow individuality and autonomy of individuals), I find value in the *ukama* ethic in doing philosophy with children. In the community of philosophical inquiry, *children together in a community of peers, they share and together they think*.

Through one's commitment to honouring one's duty and responsibility one maintains personhood and humanness (*hunhu*) in a community of others. The Shona have coined the aphorism *Munhu munhu navanhu* (a person is a person through other persons), *Ishe vanhu* ("a chief can only be one through the people") or *nyika vanhu* ("a geographical area gains its name from the people"). Failure to relate well with others in terms of mutual sharing and participative deliberation at community gatherings earns individuals derogatory names that are accompanied by isolation, and some are associated with witchcraft. The latter are often linked with some evil spirits and are therefore presumed to be possessed with some devilish spirit that haunts them to live solitarily. As a result, the Shona have in their communities isolates tagged *Gudzasoro* ("Mr Big-head"), *Muzivazvose* ("Mr Know-it-all") or *zindoga* ("isolate"). The Shona have the aphorism *Zanondoga akasiya jira mumasese* — literally meaning "the isolate, the Mr Know-it-all left his rag in the drags at a beer party (if he had mutual understanding with others, other revellers would have assisted him)". This goes to show the incomplete nature of the potential of the individual persons. Similarly, the Akan say, "Man is not a palm tree that he should be complete (or self-sufficient)" (Gyekye, 1998, p. 155). Thus, a person who may want to lead a solitary life may do so at his or her own disgrace. Displeasure in a solitary life is often articulated in the Akan proverb "solitariness (literally, "walking alone) is a pitiable condition" (Gyekye, 1996b, p. 38). Hence, a man believes he is incomplete without his fellows; he needs the support of the community and feels normal when he is in a relationship with it. To exist in isolation is deplorable among traditional Africans because one fails to take advantage of the benefits accrued through the goodwill and mutual aid provided by the communal life. The most basic guiding principle of understanding man's relationship to others is becoming a member of the community. I therefore posit that in the context of Philosophy for Children, *ukama qua mutuality in relationship is the benchmark against which the eminence of community of inquiry is measured and evaluated*.

Shona examples are plentiful to demonstrate the collective nature of the African worldview. For example, *Nhimbe* or *Humwe* is the gathering of people in neighbourhood to share the labour of weeding or harvesting. In turn, the host provides beer, *sadza* (thick porridge) and meat. When two families elect to share labour in each

others' fields on the basis of mutual agreement and this is referred to as *jangano*. *Madzoro* (orderly turn taking) is yet another example of how Shona villagers agree to take turns for taking care of domestic animals like goat, sheep and cattle. This demonstrates the value placed on collectivity in thought and action. In essence, traditional Africans hold that no individual can live a full humanity without existential complementarity, with the other being different though equal in humanity. The typical African feels more at ease when in a group than alone. Communal life implies that society proceeds for the sake of all and demands of its members' cooperation and sharing, including charity and offering labour and communal services to the poor and the disabled. Mere accumulation of individual wealth does not necessarily accord status and prestige (Dei, 1994, p. 3). It is rather by sharing with the rest of the community that the rich are granted social respect and reverence. This is also emphasised by the Ghanaian saying "a tree cannot survive a storm on its own" (Oduro, 2006, p. 3) and the Shona saying *Chara chimwe hachiswanye inda* — literally meaning "one finger cannot crush lice" — what Mbigi and Maree refer to as the "African Collective Fingers theory"⁴³ (Mbigi & Maree, 1995, p. 111). This is further explained by the Shona view that human life is a web of participating beings who collectively and relatedly share responsibilities to be fully human. Earlier on I questioned whether this does not lead to docility and conformism, thereby denying individual freedom. Mhaka (2010) is of the view that sharing is an inbuilt virtue of Shona identity. The Ukama ethic suggests that as one contributes skills and resources to the pool all will benefit. Just as in ubuntu philosophy, *ukama* speaks to the view that "the more one depends on community in a certain way, the freer one is" (Mcunu, 2004, p. 13). Thus, for the *ukama* ethic, the *summum bonum* is sharing interdependence rather than independence. This has

⁴³ This theory explains that the thumb, on its own and as an entity, will need the collective and cooperative contribution of other fingers if it is to work more productively and efficiently. Practically it implies that one needs to open up to others, include others, include everyone in the group, thereby emphasising the spirit of teamwork. Traditional African political systems and values treasured democracy, freedom of expression, consensus, grass-roots participation, consultation and institutionalisation to preserve the collective solidarity (Mbigi, 1997, p. 28).

educational implications for the child raised in traditional African communities as indicated earlier on.

9.3.3 *Ukama* as compassionate and empathetic feeling

Considering the view that individuals are unchanging equals, traditional Africans hold that all people should be treated with respect and dignity. I have referred earlier to the aphorism, *munhu munhu navanhu*, the Shona use to stress the essence of caring for others; the person as “the communal self” (Ikuenobe, 1998), exemplified by a relational, dialogical and inclusive character. As Forster (2010) observes, “one’s truest identity comes not from a moment of encountering another person (relating): it comes from a continuum of shared being (called having a relationship). Who I am is shaped by who I am in relationship with” (p. 246). Such an individual participates in the life of the community with others. Individuals are encouraged to develop an interest in the fate of fellow humans. In the context of *ukama*, sympathy allows individuals in a community to mourn together in times of sorrow. It is culturally and morally right to stand by your community member; since the Shona believe sorrow shared is half-sorrow. In addition, traditional Africans engage in lengthy talk about themselves and, in detail, they inquire about the background and welfare of those they meet, including strangers, by asking about, for example, the welfare of their families. They take care to listen to the responses of their interlocutors. I am, however, aware that strangers to the African culture will perceive this to unproductive verbiage and waste of time⁴⁴. But, the traditional Africans value this expression of fellow-feeling and humanism, placing themselves in the shoes of their fellows, including strangers. On occasion, non-Africans have often misconstrued the kindness and empathy stressed by traditional Africans as a lack of capacity to analyse contestable issues.

⁴⁴ The African people are democratic to the point of inaction. Things are never settled until everyone has had something to say. The [tribal] council allows the free expression of all shades of opinions (Bell, 2002, p. 113). Freedom of expression is accepted within the group and is called the “law of participation and is basically emotive” (Senghor, 1964). As the well-being of the community is at risk, the individual’s decision is not cultivated as wisdom, and the Akan say, “wisdom is not in the head of one person”

Active participation is demanded for all community members, especially in the chief's *dare* (village court). Inactive members, the inattentive and those who contribute virtually nothing or are often off the point are usually given menial tasks of slaughtering, skinning goats, preparing and roasting the meat for the more focused who engage in meaningful and productive debates. Thus, all would seek to remain attentive so that they are not relegated to such "debasing" roles. As a result, the Shona stress from birth, through life and beyond, the key role of participation as a mark of the identity of the individual person. Setiloane, quoted in Shutte (1993), reinforces this view by asserting that:

...[T]he essence of being is participation in which humans are always interlocked with one another... nthe human being is not only a "vital force", but more a "vital force" in participation. We notice in this case that the traditional African is identified by his or her place in the community in which he or she says, "I participate, therefore I am" (pp. 45-51).

I have argued that in African thought, individual enterprise is not disregarded but, rather, subjectivity is accepted as and when it flourishes in prevailing relational conditions through communication and interface with other fellow beings. The dialogical intersubjective character of the traditional African worldview is evident as it "...preserves the other in her otherness, in her uniqueness, without letting her slip into the distance"⁴⁵ (Louw, 2001, pp. 10-11). After all, the Akan people say "the left arm washes the right arm and the right arm washes the left" and "the fingers of hand are not equal in length" (Gyekye, 1987, p. 158). The products of such talents must be shared equally. Regardless of the individual's input to the common pool, the traditional Africans believe every community member's needs must be satisfied by one's community. No wonder that, according to the Akan, just as the Shona hold, the motto is "From each according to *whatever contribution* one can make to each according to

⁴⁵ Also refer to Shutte (1993). In his *Ubuntu: An ethic for a new South Africa* Shutte (2001) observes that "the community is not opposed to the individual, nor does it simply swallow the individual up; it enables each individual to become a unique centre of shared life" (p. 9).

one's basic needs" (Gyekye, 1987, p. 158). Hence, I can deduce that in the community of inquiry, *ukama* promises that *through participation in interpersonal transactions and intersubjective relationships between persons the individual being is acknowledged*.

Also important is the disposition of respect in *ukama*. In all encounters of life, the Shona place cardinal importance on *respect for other persons*, their spiritual, religious and political as well as cultural beliefs. It involves the capacity to listen to others humbly and honestly as well as treating them in ways you would want them to treat you. The biblical verse, "love your neighbour as you love yourself", is confirmed by the African value of respect for persons in their daily practices. Individuals are engaged in active inter-subjective relationships. In this sense, inter-subjectivity is "knowing through relationship... consciousness as communion" (De Quincey, 2005, p. 2). In the case of the Shona, it is only through this dialogical communication with others in the community that one comes to know. The individual alone or the community as an organism cannot give meaning to the world. Rather, it is the *individuals* who *together* make up the community and shape meaning. The community of inquiry with the focus of producing relations of mutuality, in the view of Buber (1957) is:

...not exercising "tolerance", but ... making present the roots of community and its ramifications, of so experiencing and living in the trunk... that one also experiences, as truly one's own, where and how the other boughs branch off and shoot up... What is called for is not neutrality but solidarity, a living answering for one another – and mutuality, living in reciprocity, not effacing the boundaries between the groups, circles and parties, but communal recognition of the common reality and communal testing of common responsibility (p. 98)

The self in a community will always relate to the other but most important is the how part. *Ukama* is therefore a matter of the self directly participating in reality with the other by referring to the other as a partner and "...transcending the boundary of the objective distance that separates them" (Shady & Larson, 2010, p. 84). In the mutually relational context of *ukama* the self and other coexist dialogically in a world symbolised by solidarity and sincere companionship. Such mutuality in a relationship implies that the self is influenced by the relation just as much as the other is. *Ukama*, in this sphere

of mutuality, is also *inclusive*. The parties involved depend on the standpoint of each other, thereby producing what Buber refers to as “genuine dialogue”; one in which “...each one of the participants really has in mind the other or others in their present and particular being and turns to them with the intention of establishing a living mutual relation between himself and them”. Thus, mutual relationship between the community and the individuals who constitute it is necessary for the identity of individuals in a community. Hence, in the context of philosophical community of inquiry, *ukama as relatedness/relationship forms individuals*.

It has already become clear in the discussion above that among the traditional Africans, despite a person being an individual in oneself, individualism is an alien orientation. I have argued that traditional Africans would emphasise that “I belong to the group and that is why I am”. Therefore, life in its completeness derives from the community of others coupled with the participation by one person in the life of the other. *Ukama* as communal relationship makes the lives of community members possible by striking equilibrium between the private and the social life. Through the maintenance of an intricate network of *ukama* (relatedness) between and among the visible and invisible beings — humans and the ancestral spirits, the traditional Africans hold that “...every person is provided with a space to breathe and live a meaningful life” (Ndukaihe, 2006, p. 233). Thus, *ukama*, besides being an abstract concept, is a rich custom in traditional African situations in which people understand themselves in plural ways as “we”, “us” and “they” and permeates all aspects of life. It often is conveyed through combined singing, pain, dancing, and expressions of grief, festivities, sharing and compassion. Growing out of the organic relationship between the majority of the people, their religious roots and the natural world, *ukama* is emphasised from childhood to assure society’s existence and eternalness by taking the position that “others are for me as I am for them. I enter into relations with them as they enter into relation with me” since the Shona say “*munhu wese ihama yangu*”, literally meaning “everyone is my relative”. This is the reason why children always are reminded to be in relationship not only with their immediate relatives but also in relational contacts with members of the extended families and all in the neighbourhood. On this view, one finds existence only in relation to others. As Shutte (1993) writes, traditional Africans say, “Because I depend on

relationships with others for being the person I am, in the beginning, at the start of my life, I am really not a person at all... I am a potential person. I only become fully human to the extent that I am included in relationships with others” (p. 92).

In addition, the traditional African notion of relationship (*ukama*) is also explained in the Aristotelian concept of a good person. As Aristotle (1985) writes, “The excellent person is related to his friend in the same way as he is related to himself, since a friend is another himself” (p. 6-7). Aristotle adds, “The excellent person labours for his friends and for his native country, and will die for them if he must; he will sacrifice money, honours and contested goods in general, in achieving what is fine for himself” (ibid). But, the critical question that I seek to explore is whether *Ukama* as relationality provides a particularly African lens on the notion of Philosophy for Children. This will be discussed in the sections that follow.

9.4 *Ukama* in the community of inquiry

In this section, I examine the African perspective of *ukama* as inter-subjectivity in the context of the discussion of the community of inquiry. I quote at length Augustine Shutte’s notion of community in the context of traditional Africa. He writes:

The key idea here is that a human person exists and develops as a person only in relation to other persons. The human self is not to be seen as something already formed and present in each human individual at birth. Instead, [the person] is still to be formed in the course of living. And it can only come into existence through the gift and influence of others. It is thus in no way material, something inside the body or the individual as for example, a mind-brain identity theorist might surmise. Insofar as it exists in a place, it exists outside the body, in relation to other persons and the whole material environment. It is truer to the African idea, however, to see self and other as coexisting, each in the other in the sense of being identified with each other. The fundamental human reality must be seen as a field of personal energy in which each individual emerges as a distinct pole or focus. The field of life is the same in each; in each, it is their humanity. All persons form a single person, not as parts for a whole, but as friends draw their life and

character from the spirit of a common friend. They have a common identity (Shutte, 2003, pp. 52-53).

Based on the above, I will explore the *ukama*/community of inquiry dynamic in the ensuing subsections. Children in Africa are called upon to take up responsibilities towards their families and are therefore obliged, as enshrined in the work for the cohesion of the family, to respect their parents, superiors and elders at all times and to assist them in case of need as enshrined in the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) Article 31. They have the obligation to:

- (a) work for the cohesion of the family, to respect his parents, superiors and elders at all times and to assist them in case of need;
- (b) serve his national community by placing his physical and intellectual abilities at its service;
- (c) preserve and strengthen social and national solidarity; and
- (d) preserve and strengthen African cultural values in his relations with other members of the society, in the spirit of tolerance, dialogue and consultation and to contribute to the moral well-being of society... (Sloth-Nielsen & Mezmur, 2008).

The above shows the centrality of community, especially for maintaining a cohesive relationship (*ukama*), to the point where instruments covering the continent in the form of charters and conventions statutes have been put in place to emphasise community even from an early age. The great virtue is cohesion and unity in relationship to prevent the dispersion of individuals into socially unviable, unconnected and, eventually, disintegrated units.

The most outstanding characteristic of the practice and presumption of the community of inquiry, which may seem contradictory, is how it enhances both communal intersubjective meaning and thinking for oneself (Kennedy, 1999b). I have already pointed out that the community of inquiry includes the individual and the community. Thinking for oneself has often been associated with individualism and the habitual

problematization of the collectively held truths, while community is linked to the preservation of collective beliefs and the submission of the self to the common good. It *appears* the two are conceptual opposites. But, if one considers them from the view of the Socratic dialogue⁴⁶, the connection appears fairly clearly. Dialogue connotes an interrogation of the other or the subject of inquiry. It is therefore justifiable to assert that dialogue is a relational encounter between subjects and between subjects and objects⁴⁷. Most important, and in the context of this discussion, the community of inquiry is an open system — that is, it interacts with the environment and, thus, is able to alter its own content and structure as well as that of its environment (Hall & Fagen, 1975). In addition, the community is a social system in which there are no constituents that attempt to exercise control over others through coercive power, including disciplinary power, which typically acts to control individuals through ranking, surveillance and normalisation (Foucault, 1979; Habermas, 1990). The community of inquiry is a pedagogy of doing philosophy with children aimed at developing communicative competence (Kennedy & Kennedy, 2010). This brings me to the place of relationality in the practice and theory of the community of philosophical inquiry. The question is: To what extent, if any, does the *ukama* ethic enhance higher-order cognitive and social skills such as reasoning, critical and creative thinking, willingness to self-correct opinions, and openness to the opinions of others which the community of inquiry purports to achieve in children? I explore below the constructive and critical dynamics of the notion of *ukama* as understood in traditional Africa. I engage some illustrations of doing philosophy with children founded on the *ukama* ethic. Below I illustrate the conception of *ukama* as communal living in a traditional African village as shown by John Gombe.

Illustration 1

⁴⁶ The Socratic dialogue is the most fashionable kind of the Socratic Method. In this approach, participants attempt to investigate the truth and the value of their opinions in a more or less structured way. Their stimulus the investigation is their own experience(s). Participants try to understand each other and engage in a common dialogical enterprise instead of a formal debate or informal discussion.

⁴⁷ See Lipman et al(1980), Kennedy (1998) and Splitter&Sharp(1995)

Gombe provides a case, which is taken to a local court for arbitration. The hypothetical case is one in which neighbours in the *mana* (community) (village level) clashed over another's cattle, which strayed into a neighbour's maize field, causing extensive damage to the crops. Badza and Chimombe are the litigants presented thus:

Badza: *Imi mangozvionerawo madyirwo akaita munda, kuti hazvigoni kutsanangurika. Hupfumi here hunokupai kudada, kuti pane hupenyu hwavamwe ndipo pomofudzira zvipfuyo zvenyu? Kana mombe dzoita zvokuvata mumunda, varidzi vadzo vanenge vachiti dziri kupi? Idzo mombe dzinenge dziine varidzi chaivo vasingazivi kuti dziripi? Zvino ini ndinoda masaga gumi ezviyo, muripo womunda wangu wamakaparadza. Ini ndiko kuti tigarisane zvakanaka. Handingapedzi simba rangu kurimira zvipfuwo zvenyu. Mhuri yangu munoda kuti izodya vhu here? Kana vana venyu voita zvokufudzira mombe mumunda hakusi kuringa vamwe muhapwa here ikoko?*

Chimombe: *Ngaisiye matambo, Mazvimbakupa. Inonaya inosiya munera. Kuzvara hakusi iko kupa mwoyo. Kushinha kwepwere. Iyi imhosva haina nzvenda. Zvamataura zvanzwikwa, shoko harivhikwi. Mhosva rusudzo inongouya usingadi. Inga ndimi wani vakuru makati vana nembwa hazvina kusiyana. Vanokuparira mhosva wakavarairwa. Mukati zve mugoni wepwere ndiye usinayo. Vana zvamunoona, vanorwisanisa vagere havo. Kana nesuwo zvamunoona takagara kudai, tiri kutoshaiwa pokunyura nezvatakaitirwa navana. Zvamarereva tazvinzwa hedu. Mati tingaramba zvipi tirisu takupaza? Asika vakuru vakati motsi haarwirwi asi piri. Zvino sezvo mangoona kuti kuita kwepwere, madini kutitira tsiye nyoro?*

Badza: *Zvakanaka, mukumbiro wenyu ndamunzwa. Asi zvino ngazvive ziita kamwe mimba yomusikana. Zvinhu zvakadai hazvidi kugaroitwa. Zvinokonjera mapfumo nemheremhere. Ibvai makomekedza vana venyu kuti vagare meso ari pazvipfuwo. Vavakidzani havanaki kugaromisidzana savatevedzani. Mangwana unozoshaiwa anokukwenya mhezi yokumusana. Nokuti munhu kuvaviwa haukwizi pamuti semombe.*

***Chimombe:** Tatenda chaizvo Mazvimbakupa. Chete kutenda kwakitsi kuri mumwoyo. Kuziva kwenyu henyu kuti kutongana kwavavakidzani. Ndekwekutsunyana zvisingabudisi ropa*

Badza: You have seen for yourself how my field has been ravaged so much so that it cannot be described. Is it your wealth that makes you arrogant so that where other people's livelihood is involved there you graze your cattle? If cattle simply take their ease in a field, do their owners ever think of where they are? If cattle have proper herds, would they spend the whole day not knowing where they are? Now I demand ten bags of finger millet as compensation for my field, which you have destroyed. This is in order to enable us to live together in peace. I cannot waste my strength growing crops for your cattle. Do you expect my family to live on soil? If your children allow such things as to let cattle graze in a field that is now equivalent to showing contempt for others?

Chimombe: We beg for clemency, Mazvimbakupa. The falling rain does not destroy the tender grass. Begetting does not mean imparting irresponsibility. It is just the mischief of the young. This charge cannot be denied. We have heard what you have said a word cannot be warded off. A case like this is like a fart, which comes out willy-nilly. Indeed, it is elders like you who have said, children and dogs are one and the same, they involve you in wrongdoing while you are unaware. And, further, you have said, the man who boasts he can manage his children is a man without a single one. Children, as you know, cause trouble between those who are at peace with one another. Even we, as you see us here, are feeling ashamed of what the children did in your despite. We have understood what you have said; the first mistake must not be fought over, but the second. Now that you have seen that this is a result of children's carelessness, can you not be merciful to us?

Badza: All right, your request is granted, but let this be something done only once, like the first pregnancy of a girl. Things like this should not be allowed

to happen regularly, they cause conflict and brawling. You must warn your children very firmly that they must keep their eyes on their charges. Neighbours should not fight one another like elder and younger brothers. Otherwise, you will not have anyone to scratch your back in future because when a person has an itch, he does not rub himself against a tree like an ox.

Chimombe: Thank you very much, Mazvimbakupa. Only I find it hard to express my gratitude in words. It is your good sense that recognises the fact that judgement between neighbours is like pinching one another without any loss of blood (Gombe, 1993, pp. 6-7).

The above case will be examined in the context of *ukama* as an ethical value in traditional communities to stress the concept of *ukama*. The insert will also demonstrate how the narrative may become a stimulus in which *ukama* as an ethic can contribute to a meaningful philosophical community of inquiry in the classroom.

9.5 *Ukama* as theory of community of inquiry

The central tenets of any traditional African community, that is, codependence, shared interests and beliefs, concern for individuality, caring and sustaining relations through participation and deliberation, are demonstrated in the Badza-Chimombe case. In a community of others, the two litigants *listen* to each other by acknowledging the presence of the other with *respect*⁴⁸. Similarly, as Lipman observes, in the context of the classroom community of inquiry, children “...listen to one another with respect, build on one another’s ideas, challenge one another to supply reasons for otherwise unsupported opinions, assist each other in drawing inferences from what has been said, and seek to identify one another’s assumptions” (Lipman, 2003, p. 20). Despite the offence committed by Chimombe and the effect the stray cattle had on Badza’s yield and subsequently his family’s staple food, they both are in *consensus*. After a lengthy

⁴⁸ See footnote 51 to cut on repetition

deliberation, they both acknowledge they are *fallible*. They consent that children being what they are, their irresponsibility and mischief is human and, after all, to err is human. The case in point is put to *rigorous, critical and open-minded examination* but is resolved in a *harmonious* way, and through *active, participatory dialogue*, and in *mutual* agreement.

From the foregoing, if community of inquiry is at the heart of doing philosophy with children in elementary and secondary school, of what value is community? ⁴⁹

Dialogue, what Amir (2001) defines as “a joint communicative activity with the goal of discovering the truth” (p. 239), is the core tenet of the community of inquiry. Dialogical thinking in a community of inquiry builds tolerance of the other, engages conflicting points of view and brings forth a sense of empowerment — of having the ability to make a difference in one’s environment (Kennedy, 1995 -a). The community of inquiry, like any other communities, or collective groups comprise individuals who stand in various relations, not only to one another, but also to the collective itself. However, a community of inquiry distinguishes itself from other learning communities in that members are engaged in a shared or cooperative search for meaning since “... conceptual frameworks are largely social, rather than individual phenomena, because meaning cannot be had in isolation” (Rollins, 1995, p. 33). Each member gains from the ideas and contributions of everyone else, and it is hoped that each participant develops a feeling of being a valued member of his community. In addition, Fisher (1998) argues that distributed intelligence underpins the idea of community of inquiry, especially given that “...human thinking is at its richest when it occurs in ways that are socially shared and distributed” (p. 61).

The intersubjective encounter involves participants developing understanding and generating meaning through the exploration of ideas in *collaboration with others*. This is well embedded in the notion of *ukama*. First, participants recognise the value of the

⁴⁹ See Bellah, Masden, Sullivan, Swidler, and Tipton (1985); (de Tocqueville, 1966; Dewey, 1916; Gardner, 1991; Selznick, 1992; Varenne, 1986)

other by providing for an egalitarian presence in the community. The Ukama ethic rooted in African humanism and communalism recognises that we live in a community of others to whom we owe respect by virtue of their humanity. There is epistemic value in the other since not only can we *be* (ontologically) because of others, but we can only *know* from communion with others. The ukama ethic among the traditional Africans holds a great deal of promise for an African perspective of Philosophy for Children. It is encouraged in children at an early age to a point where children, upon entry in school, hold firmly and, with high esteem, the traditional emphasis of the notion of the “*otherness of the other*”, especially the understanding that their peers are their relatives, including strangers by virtue of their humanness. Right from the time they are capable of using the language, traditional African children are led into a community of inquiry by adults (with girls attached to a grandmother and boys equally the grandfather). But, the question one might pose is: What is contribution of such a gender-based division in a community of inquiry in the classroom? Will members of either gender challenge the beliefs and truths held by their opposites and if so to what extent?

Children are told life-related stories and other folk lores, which are then explored and analysed with the adult as a facilitator, as will be demonstrated later. In the process, they learn not only to challenge their peers’ views, but they also learn to *respect the other’s* point of view. This calls for *kuzvinyorovesa* among the Shona (to soften oneself) by being humble, without showing off one’s knowledge or looking down upon those who offer less plausible views or no knowledge at all. But, given this need for humility especially among the young as they interact with the older members of their community, the question is: To what extent are individual values such as personal initiative, responsibility, subjectivity and self-determination accommodated? Significant in this situation is the essence of allowing children to think for themselves through the help of others. After all, in the traditional African sense, ideas are only personal in as far as they are still undeveloped and immature. They are only realisable once they are subjected to the communal yardstick. It is through thorough sifting and general conscience that they become real and manifest. Individual endeavours and private initiative without community approval and confirmation may be rendered aberrational and evil spirit-inspired. Hence, there is a need for cooperating with others in

relationship. Children, from childhood, are taught to develop the cooperative spirit to avoid the label “outcast” since individuals, isolated from the communalistic ethos, are said to be possessed with an evil spirit — hence they remain outside the communal living enjoyed by all.

Within the community of inquiry, each individual member understands himself as *among others*. In ethical and psychological terms, this principle is referred to as the *reciprocity principle*, whereby to see oneself as among others is to understand that one’s place in the community is relational. This implies that individual identity, esteem and status in the group are committed in the identity, place and value of other members. This relational/reciprocal dimension of the community of inquiry expresses the idea of “I need to be esteemed by you; I need to esteem you in turn”. Critics might interpret such a stance as a reflection and essence of selfishness or self-interest, but, in the context of *ukama* in community, it is a matter of returning the good offered to you to discourage dependence and indolence. To this, the Shona say “*kandiro kanoenda kunobva kamwe*” (literally, If you assist me with a plateful of food, I will return the same), which is expressed in the English proverb “one good turn deserves another”. As Gyekye (2010) notes, “social or community life itself, a robust feature of the African communitarian society, mandates a morality that clearly is weighted on duty to others and to the community” (n.p.). It is important to observe that the notion of “other” in this instance demands a realisation that I am both *one* in relation to myself as an entity and *other* (in relation to how others deem me). The above stresses the virtue of solidarity embedded in the *ukama* ethic and the accompanying compassion and cooperation essential for the success of the community.

In addition to the features discussed above, the community of inquiry is “...no larger than the sum of its parts” (Splitter, 2007, p. 273). With reference to the *ukama* ethic, the Shona say “*nyika vanhu*” or “*ishe vanhu*”, literally meaning “the earth is the people who inhabit it and the chief only exists with reference to the people under him, respectively”. This serves to recapitulate the relational character of the traditional African communities but at the same time to recognise that it is individuals who make up the community and therefore they deserve to have a position in the community. The

community of inquiry as an entity, assimilating the ukama ethic, continues to exist through each individual member who internalises the thinking of the community (that is of the members, collectively or singly). In essence, it is not the mere transmission of community views that the individual assimilates, but more the equal contributions that members make in their search for meaning that are most worthwhile. It is the benefit that the individuals gain from community, which is worth more than the community itself.

In addition to the above features of the community of inquiry, I include openness or transparency. Ukama in traditional African communities does not bind one's relations within one's community, but rather stretches outwards to other communities, thereby making a society an interlinked web of communities based on the understanding that "*munhu wese ihama yako*" (literally, "everyone is your relative"). In other words, our identities are dialogical in nature; therefore each person's identity is actually defined by coexistence. Similarly, in the ideal classroom community of inquiry this community is bound by rules that are democratically set by members, and the dialogical construct of community transcends the community to embrace other like communities, thereby removing the boundary established in the first case. So, in the final analysis different communities will manifest themselves as they interlock with other communities, forming an encompassing community of inquiry which benefits all. This creates democratic communities that have "varied points of shared common interests" (Dewey, 2004, pp. 82-83) and retain open communication lines with other like communities, thereby making them diverse and inclusive. Overall, I have identified the core principles of ukama and community as:

- relationships through dialogical thinking,
- being among others
- being no greater than the constituents and
- transparency

These accord the community of inquiry a unique status, especially when doing Philosophy with Children. Significantly, irrespective of the permission for children to

be members of other communities of their choice, the community of inquiry of which they are members, does not compete with other like communities. Instead, it fosters the child's cognitive and affective abilities. In addition, the ties of the dialogical community act as a reminder to children that their identities as persons are interwoven with the relationships that they have formed with others. Merleau-Ponty (1962) conceives of a dialogical relationship which inspires inter-subjectivity thus:

In the experience of dialogue, there is constituted between the other person and myself a common ground; my thought and his are interwoven in a single fabric — we have a dual being, where the other is no longer a mere bit of behaviour in my transcendental field, nor I in his; we are collaborators for each other in a consummate reciprocity (p.354).

This dialogical aspect of the community includes situating oneself within a communal location through inquiring which is characterised as self-othering, or experiencing self as other⁵⁰. To a large extent, the ethic of *ukama* is the foundation of the community of inquiry, since without it there are isolated individuals who may not together think caringly, collaboratively, and creatively and critically. In the absence of a community of relations, individuals will lose the appreciation of the other as a social being creating a setting in which knowledge can be generated.

I find *ukama* in the context of the community of inquiry to be promoting a caring attitude in which the individuals in the community respect the other as an independent, autonomous being, though a member of the whole. The ethic of *ukama* brings to the essence of community of inquiry the virtues of acceptance, trust, inclusion and openness. The capacity to think critically, which is one of the central goals of the community of inquiry, is set in motion if the setting allows the critical thinker to change one's course of action based on the reasons at hand. A willingness to be moved, through individual volition, by reasons entails the capacity to value others' ideas and thoughts and a willingness to listen to them, understand them and judge them in relation to their

⁵⁰ See Kennedy (2004)

validity and reliability. This shows the centrality of relating to the other. The humanistic, communalistic and holistic worldviews of the traditional Africans provides to a community of inquiry the human face embedded in ukama. A genuine community of inquiry fosters in the participants the ethical value of being human by encouraging tolerance, respect for persons, respect for individuality and a community ethos.

What then are the unique virtues that the traditional African Ukama ethic contributes to the philosophical community of inquiry with children? Notable among them is the sociality of the person. It takes into cognisance that while persons are by nature social beings, they are also by nature individual, thereby preserving both sides of the person. The African worldview of community emphasises participation and belonging as the essence of being a person. As Senghor writes, community “was founded on dialogue and reciprocity, the group had priority over the individual without crushing him or her, but allowing him or her to blossom as a person” (Senghor, 1966, p. 5). Just like the institution of the family, the institution has no function outside itself and *ukama* as relationality is simply a cement that holds the parts together. If ukama is founded on the principles of 1) deliberative engagement, 2) listening to each other’s voice, 3) respect for the presence of the other, 4) accepting fallibility, and 5) harmonious participatory dialogue, then these are good reasons for the community of philosophical inquiry to be informed by such principles. But one may argue that these principles are the guiding tools for the community of inquiry espoused in the Lipmanian and other models espoused elsewhere around the globe. Critics may go even further and interrogate the uniqueness of the place of ukama in an African perspective of Philosophy for Children. I will make an attempt to justify this in the last section of this chapter.

The *ukama* ethic on which the case is founded does not support agreement to disagree, unlike the deliberations promoted in a philosophical community of inquiry as will be demonstrated below.

9.6 In a classroom setting

The case at hand can be used as a narrative for stimulating philosophical inquiry in a rural or peri-urban high school in a Shona-speaking community. The following could be

the structure of a 40-minute Philosophy for Children class. Sitting in a circle, with learners in direct face to face contact with each other:

- 1) The short episode is read aloud with learners either taking turns to read it fluently or democratically choosing a reader
- 2) Questions or points of interest are listed on the board
- 3) One or possibly two of the questions are democratically chosen and addressed through group dialogue
- 4) Discussion may well be continued in later sessions (quite often, the same issues arise at various times and in different contexts)

Dialogue within a classroom community of inquiry is ideally typified by the following:

1). Use of criteria: Learners are encouraged to examine and explain why they think as they do about issues under discussion. They are asked to transcend mere statements of opinion by giving reasons for their judgements and reflecting upon the criteria employed in making these judgements. The goal is to help children approach conceptual issues with a readiness to appraise and evaluate those aspects of the issues which call for judgement. They may want to, through a dialogical deliberation with their peers, engage the following concepts which emanate from the case under discussion: *kunzwana* (civic friendship), *kugarisana* (coexistence), *kugamuchirana* (tolerance and acceptance), arrogance, compensation, reciprocity, *kuregerera* (forgiveness, responsibility, fallibility etc). 2). Self-correction: Individuals are encouraged to listen carefully to the comments of each member of the community and to be willing to reconsider their own judgments and opinions. Each opinion is subject to careful (and caring) scrutiny. Participants' admission that one's initial opinion may have been incorrect or partially flawed is valued although there is no attempt to come to a single "correct" judgement for the group. 3) Attention to context: Members of a community of inquiry learn to pay attention to the contexts in which they make judgements and develop understandings (Lipman, 1988).

Thus, reflection and dialogue within such a classroom community of inquiry is understood to require a reciprocity of effort, a willingness to be challenged by the ideas

of others (teacher and peers), a process of reconstruction of one's own ideas and judgements based on such factors as coherence, consistency and comprehensiveness, together with a sensitivity to the particularity of each situation (Sharp, 1989). In this pedagogical approach, the teacher helps the group focus on the primary issues under discussion, responds to and participates in the dialogue, and fulfils the function of facilitating the inquiry through asking questions, such as:

- Why do you say that?
- How does that relate to what you said before?
- Could we talk about the criteria you used in reaching that conclusion?

Most important is the quality of questions which, according to Van der Leeuw:

1)...should be sensible questions... questions that are important and interesting enough to be investigated in joint inquiry... *(and)* 2) Should be understood by everybody and should be answered on the basis of reasoning and common experience alone *(devoid of expert empirical or scientific knowledge)*" (van der Leeuw, 2006, p. 25).

Hence, in the case above the use of Shona as the medium of deliberation is most important as children will form concepts in the language they are most familiar with. The question of language will be considered in detail in later parts of this chapter. However, the possibility and success of a philosophical community of inquiry in the context of Africa will depend heavily on the complementarities of the notion of Ukama in community and the Lipmanian perspective as shown in its attendant rigour, systematicity and critique to held beliefs and truths. Hence, in the next section I argue the case for a hybridised Philosophy for Children perspective in the 21st-century Africa.

9.7 Hybridisation of Philosophy for Children

The history of Africa is suffused with the language of colonialism, characterised by "organised subjugation of the cultural, scientific and economic life of the African

people” (Higgs, 2008, p. 152). Much has been written about the positive as well as the negative impact of westernism on the African psyche (Diop, 1962; Dzobo, 1975; Gyekye, 1997; Horton, 1970; Ngugi-Wa-Thiong’o.J., 1972; Odora Hoppers, 2000; Serequeberhan, 1991b). Colonial and postcolonial education in Africa has been criticised for perpetuating cultural and intellectual servitude and devaluation of traditional African cultures. Such forms of conquest have led to the neglect of African ways of thinking and of connecting with their world. This has led some African intellectuals to call for a reappropriation of pre-colonial forms of education to rediscover the roots of African identity (see Kanu, 2007; Makgoba, 1996; Higgs & Van Wyk, 2007; Shizha, 2006; Higgs, 2008). They argue that a whole generation of African children is being raised with little or no knowledge at all of their traditional roots, completely westernised. This poses the challenge of children entirely losing their past. As a result, with the advent of political independence, African states have endeavoured to redefine themselves through reclaiming their social, cultural and economic space, including the epistemic one in order to rename their world themselves, especially in view of what Odora-Hoppers (2000) calls “...the arrogance of modernisation and the conspiracy of silence in academic disciplines towards what is organic and alive in Africa” (p.1). But, as will be argued later, it is not the case that all the West brought and continues to offer Africa is negative. I will show that there are elements of the Lipmanian model of Philosophy for Children discussed in Chapter 6 that an African perspective can cherish and appropriate in the 21st century.

Motioning an Africanist perspective of education, African scholars, on the one hand, contend that Africanising educational institutions should start from what is indigenous to Africa. On the other hand, their critics hold that the move suggested by the pro-Africanisation agenda will not only bring the standards down, but will also be incompatible with globalisation and the accompanying modernisation. In Chapter 8, I observed that modernity is not completely antithetical to or incompatible with tradition insofar as modernity contains several elements of prior cultural traditions. One would ask: How can African traditional forms of education be reappropriated for this purpose while, at the same time, responding to the requirements of living successfully in postcolonial and global times? (see Kanu, 2007). The African Philosophy debate

explored in Chapter 2 has evinced fundamental positions between the universalists and the culturalists/traditionalists. While the universalists have some valuable insights about what philosophy should be, their approach has often been criticised for being “proxies of cultural imperialism”, though “every philosophical view is positional and standpoint-based” (Agwuele, 2009, p. 112). On the other hand, the traditionalist orientation shows how anything defined in the context of African philosophy is a discourse about African customary experience. For the latter, philosophy involves the retrieval of ideas from the African cultural heritage, while deconstructing the absolutist characterisation of philosophy. In this chapter, I propose nothing other than the transcendence of *purely* Eurocentric education, acculturation, and socialisation. I argue for an African perspective of doing philosophy with children that incorporates the essential principles of the modes of thoughts originating from *both* traditional Africa and the Western world. I position them as existing in a third space in the 21st-century Africa in which they are neither purely truly traditional African nor a replica of Western thoughts. I attempt to answer the question: What is do philosophy with children in modern Africa and does it make good sense to talk of a *modern* way of Philosophy for Children appropriate to African cultural *tradition*? I will argue that an African perspective of Philosophy for Children is rooted in the modes of African Philosophy, as examined in Chapter 2. This section then offers a theoretical evaluation of the plausibility of a hybridised Philosophy for Children project that incorporates the virtues of traditional African ways of doing philosophy with children with the Lipmanian model of it to suit the 21st-century child in Africa in order for the children to “...deploy the tools of philosophy to tackle African existential problems” (ibid).

I argue that the hermeneutic-narrative approach is the appropriate method of interpreting African culture when doing philosophy with children. Redeploying, though respecting, the multicultural dimension, one in which each ethnic group maintains a sense of identity social cohesion and opportunity, I embrace, in this section, an intercultural orientation that involves the notion of cultural hybridity. I argue that the 21st-century Africa is a hybrid of cultures, and hence the education offered in schools is no longer pure and originary but a hybrid education. In defence of a hybridised Philosophy for Children for Africa, I submit that such a project is a pragmatically sound

way of exploring the African experiences and dilemmas. Hence, hybridisation is a process of meeting reality from an African cultural perspective. A hybridised Philosophy for Children is an attempt to unravel and reveal a distinctly African enterprise running parallel to the Lipmanian model, one that is neither traditional nor universal but rather a notion of Philosophy for Children contingent on African culture and dynamically suitable for the changing times of the 21st century. I now turn to the notion of hybridisation.

9.7.1 The notion of hybridisation

A number of scholars have highlighted that the concept of hybridity occupies a central place in social scientific discourses especially in the background of postcolonisation and globalisation (Bhabha, 1996; Koopman, 2010; Pieterse, 2004). With its origins in the context of different plant species, the word “hybrid” literally means mix, cross, amalgam or crossbreed. While often used in a derogatory sense to signal an absence or lack of *purity*, a more positive use of the concept of hybridity has of late been developed and has since acquired the status of a commonsense term. In effect, the current use of the term is inspired by taking a negative term and renovating it into a positive symbol in order “to wear with pride the name they were given in scorn” (Rushdie, 1988, p. 93). The positive side of hybridity is located in its invariable acknowledgement that identity is a construct of a negotiation of difference. It accepts that the manifestation of fissures and gaps, as well as the contradictions in society are not a sign of weakness. Not limited to the catalogues of difference, hybridity emerges from the opening of a new space within which other elements meet and change each other. In the context of contemporary cultural discourse it is “...celebrated and privileged as a kind of superior cultural intelligence owing to advantage of in-betweenness, the straddling of two cultures and the consequent ability to negotiate the difference” (Rutherford, 1990, p. 158). A hybrid identity forms when constituents of two or more cultures are amalgamated and thereby create a new cultural identity. I now turn to Bhabha’s notion of hybridity.

Homi K. Bhabha, a leading proponent in contemporary cultural discourse, provides a theory of cultural difference coupled with the conceptual language of *hybridity* and the *third space*. For him the notion of hybridity is best explained in the construction of

culture and identity within conditions of antagonism and inequality (Bhabha, 1996; Odora-Hoppers, 2001a). Hence, hybridity is the process by which the colonial authority undertakes to translate the identity of the colonised (the *Other*) within a remarkable universal framework, but then fails to produce something familiar but rather new. It is out of the interweaving of the cultural elements of both the coloniser and the colonised that, as Bhabha contends, a new hybrid identity emerges, thereby challenging the authority and legitimacy of any essentialist cultural identity. Traces of initial identities become elements of a new identity though the third identity, which emerges, is not the same as the independent parts. Hence, the notion of hybridity in social scientific discourse challenges certainties and essentialisms (Hoogvelt, 1997) by disputing the purity of any culture or identity. In this sense, hybridity is "...a theoretical metaconstruction of social order" (Rowe & Schelling, 1991, p. 1); it is transgressive and transcendental, insofar as it goes beyond the boundaries of essentialism. The hybrid holds elements of the local and the foreign, hence the intermixture makes it unique. Bhabha is conscious of the folly of fixity and fetishism of identities within binary colonial thinking by asserting that "all forms of culture are continually in a process of hybridity" (Meredith, 1998, p. 211). He argues that cultures are neither existing as a unit in themselves, nor simply dualistic in the relation of the *self* and the *other*, but instead are open to interpretation by the users, thereby making them different from the original intention.

Bhabha (1996) posits hybridity as an in-between space, what he refers to as a *third space*, where the cutting edge of translation and negotiation is isolated. This implies that the third space becomes a form of expression and a gap that produces new possibilities. The new hybrid space is a tentative site in which cultural meaning has no fixity. Those who occupy hybrid spaces benefit from having an understanding of both local knowledge and global cosmopolitanism (Lone, 2000; Werbner, 1997). Hybrid identity is therefore situated within this third space as a lubricant in the combination of cultures by oiling and crisscrossing both cultures; mediating and negotiating similarity and difference within the scheme of exchange and inclusion.

The concepts of hybridity and third space contribute significantly to the avoidance of “...the perpetuation of antagonistic finalisms and develops inclusionary, multifaceted, not dualistic, patterns of cultural exchange and maturation” (Coombes & Brah, 2000, p. 3). Hence, the hybrid discourse creates space for negotiation in which “...power is unequal but its articulation may be equivocal” (Odora-Hoppers, 2001a, p. 212). Such a form of negotiation is neither assimilation of one culture by another nor collaboration but rather creates possibilities of the emergence of “...interstitial agency” (ibid) that denies the dual representation of socio-cultural enmity. In effect, Koopman (2010) reveals that hybridity “...does not advance a type of mixing that dissolves the entities that mix, and brings forth a totally new uniformed entity” (n.p.) In agreement with Bhabha, he views hybridity as “...a mingling, exposure to the other, dialogue with the other, interaction with the other, participation in the life of the other, hospitality with the other, learning from the other” (ibid). This exposure will leave you transformed by the internalisation of something of the other. Hence, the pedagogy of hybridity speaks to the multiplicity of voices, opinions and points of view and thereby accepting ambiguity by holding that similar phenomena or reality may be described in different and contradicting ways by different people in different contexts. Such thinking is premised on the view that as long as people are constantly and continually in the process of being formed and re-formed, there can be no absolute moment rooted in the notion of the pure originary (Bhabha, 1994). I argue that those people who cannot survive in ambiguity opt for either absolutism or relativism. Absolutists hold that only their interpretation, description and solutions are pure and right, thereby preparing and facilitating the ground for judgementalism and fundamentalism, including some forms of irrationality, stigmatisation, demonisation and annihilation of the *other*. By contrast, the hybridity pedagogy advances the concept of proximity among people so that they develop sympathy and empathy with each other’s differences, while enhancing solidarity among them. By operating in an environment of hearing distance, people tend to hear one another, feel each other, and participate in each other’s joyous and sorrowful lives and even in times of pain and anger. Du Bois describes hybridity as resulting in a double consciousness and observes that groups that occupy this space experience a kind of “twoness”, as two identities trying to exist within one person (Roland, 1992) since cultural experiences, past and present, have not been flowing towards cultural

harmonisation. Wherever Western modernisation has had an impact, cultural synchronisation occurs, especially in technological change.

Hybridisation is a “twofold process involving the interpenetration of the universalisation of particularism and the particularisation of universalism” (Pieterse, 2001, p. 100); one which settles the two in some distinguished cultural synthesis. The indigenous and the exogenous interact to create a new identity that is distinct from each context. As the two interact, the foreign is influenced by the local and, in turn, the local is influenced by the foreign. This implies that the local is universalised and the universal is localised. Hence, an inevitable relationship between the local and global produces the hybrid. The result is a form of hybridity that “signifies the encounter, conflict, and/or blending of two ethnic or cultural categories which, while by no means pure and distinct in nature, tend to be understood and experienced as meaningful identity labels by members of these categories” (Bhabha, 1985, p. 199). Consequently, conceptually hybridisation becomes a negotiation process. Neither the coloniser nor the coloniser’s cultures become dominant. Rather, they exist in a new space; a new culture in which the voices of hybrid elements are in a dialectical relation devoid of cultural supremacy.

In the context of the African situation, I hasten to add, hybridity is a problematic of colonial representation of African reality, which attempts to reverse the effects of the colonial denial of the African presence. Hence, the hybridity that I intimate is a survival strategy for cultures which, as described by Lunga (2004), is “...caught between the languages of their colonisation and their indigenous languages” and, in consequence, hybridisation is the process through which postcolonial cultures “...use colonial languages without privileging colonial languages” (p. 291). Culture and education become colonial spaces of intervention and contestation, which can be transformed by the variable and partial desire of hybridity. However, Bhabha’s dialectical theory of ambivalence, which explains the process of creating a new culture along the conflict of two cultures or any two discursive fields, contributes towards depoliticising postmodern theory, thereby proposing how two disparate sides of an argument can converge on a neutral ground. I find Bhabha’s concepts of ambivalence, mimicry, interstice and hybridity useful in the context of doing Philosophy for Children in Africa. Kraidy’s

(2005) assertion that the notion of hybridity “...involves the fusion of two hitherto relatively distinct forms, styles, or identities, cross-cultural contact... (and) is a prerequisite for hybridity” (p. 5) holds great promise for a hybridised Philosophy for children in the 21st-century Africa. But, how can we situate the concept of hybridity in the context Philosophy for Children given the Lipmanian model (origination as the modern/Western perspective) and the traditional African ways of doing philosophy with children in the 21st-century Africa? The binary representation of universalism and culturalism/traditionalism discussed earlier will be located within the context of hybridity of Philosophy for Children in Africa. I have argued that the cultures in 21st-century Africa exist as conceptually neutral spaces. But, in terms of doing philosophy with children, the question is whose method and material and content should be used? In the next section, I pay attention to the concept of Philosophy for Children as the hermeneutics of African culture. I will argue that doing philosophy with children in Africa involves an interpretation of the hybrid cultures that are present in Africa now and the process will involve a hybridised approach to the interpretation. But, before I do that I need to unpack the concept of hermeneutics.

9.7.2 The notion of hermeneutics

I will begin this section by accepting the Okoro (2005) claim that “ a symbiosis exists between philosophy and culture...”, with culture often considered “...the bedrock of philosophy” (p. 51). Philosophy arguably plays a central role in reclaiming, renewing and recultivating culture by situating it outside the confinement of archaic traditions. The critical and rigorous evaluation of tradition leads us to higher levels of synthesis. Several African philosophers⁵¹ have proposed that hermeneutics could provide a vital tool for an analysis of the African experience and therefore constitute an essential element of the African philosophy debate. Without dismissing and undermining the idea of philosophy as universal, I submit to Janz’s contention that philosophy comes from a

⁵¹ These include, among others, Serequeberhan (2000) — *African philosophy: A Historical-Hermeneutical Investigation of the Conditions of its Possibility*, The Hermeneutics of African Philosophy: Horizon and Discourse, Madu (1992) — *African Symbols, Proverbs and Myths: The Hermeneutics of Destiny* and Bell (1989) — *Narrative in African Philosophy*.

place (Janz, 2004). For Theophilus Okere, in his *African Philosophy: A Historical-Hermeneutical Investigation of the Conditions of its Possibility* (1983), hermeneutic philosophy⁵² is both the interpretive tool and the result of intervening in and interpreting lived experience. Hence the role of philosophy, for Okere (1983), is to deal with the non-philosophical features of lived experience. For him, the non-philosophical implies “...the non-reflected, that unreflected baggage of cultural background” (p.88). Reading between the lines, it appears Okere’s proposition for any philosophy to start from a people’s culture reveals some elements of nostalgia. What he proposes is a unique philosophy for Africa rooted in a particular tradition of non-philosophy. This position sounds plausible from a critical point of view. I argued earlier that no people’s philosophy can be reduced to other philosophical systems. Consequently, I can deduce from Okere’s thesis that African Philosophy, an African philosophy of education and hence an African perspective of Philosophy for Children can be unique and uses all the rational tools employed and essentialised by other philosophical traditions. But, Okere’s argument is only vital as far as it goes to present hermeneutics as the link between a people’s culture (their non-philosophy) and philosophy. The biggest challenge to Okere’s submission is his implied pure African culture. It is rather contentious, if not impossible, as argued in the last section, to talk of a pure and originary African culture on which to base a unique African Philosophy. I question Okere’s hermeneutics of African culture as philosophy. It is nothing other than a silent articulation of (neo)colonialism, if not a perpetuation of the status quo. It lacks the theoretical tools to challenge the existing conditions and is rather shallow on alternative possibilities. However, I acknowledge his transcendence of Hountondji’s critique of ethnophilosophy by proposing that African Philosophy should be constructed from African culture of which the latter is the stimulus for reflection. The dual challenge for any perspective of doing philosophy is the question of how to honour the traditional African techniques of philosophising and, at the same time, measuring up to the conventional methodological demands of the Western tradition of philosophising. But, is it a question of sameness

⁵² This has been briefly examined in the context of Hermeneutical Philosophy as an additional trend in Henry Odera Oruka’s trends in African Philosophy discussed in Chapter 2.

with Western ways of the philosophic enterprise? As argued earlier, each tradition of philosophy is unique so the question of sameness falls out just as the question of the culturalist/universalist binary addressed the “sameness” issue. Hence, philosophies cannot be the same.

In the Serequeberhan (2000) seminal work, *Our Heritage: The Past in the Present of African -American and African Experience*, the element of hybridity captured especially as he argues that: “This non-identity, this in-between, is the ambiguity of our heritage. For we are the ones – in one way or another – who live and have experienced this ‘ambiguous adventure’ and feel, in the very depth of our being, the unnerving experience of being two in one, Europe and non-Europe” (p. 2). The 21st-century African culture and therefore philosophy is an “in-between”, the Western perspective and the African one and thus is not an alienated space. Rather, it is a place in its own right of separate existence. Hence, Serequeberhan (2000) suggests that:

The heritage of the struggle beyond the defeat of colonialism, this “new humanity”... this is what Fanon calls us to. It is an Other-directed openness, not “an already established interpretation of nature, history, world, and the ground of the world.” It is an open-ended project of humanity, in process, that finds itself in joint struggles (p. 12).

He recognises that “in-betweenness” of the African heritage and places the African in that context. The African cultures and, in turn, their philosophies can best be interpreted in this space. However, I submit that the African heritage should guard against the reinvasion of cultural imperialism and neocolonialism. Thus, the hermeneutic method is positioned between the particularism of the traditional school and the universalism of the modernists. Consequently, Owolabi (2001), in defending the hermeneutical-narrative approach, has come to the conclusion that it is “...the most credible of all the available methods because this method by its very nature possesses the appropriate means of retrieving the authentic philosophical heritage of Africa” (p. 152). I agree with this position if it is based on the understanding that “...philosophy is essentially a cultural phenomenon...” (Gyekye, 1987, p. 43). African philosophy can only bear its true name and authenticity when it continues to be linked to its cultural roots. The

hermeneutic tradition of philosophy that I propose stresses a paradigm shift from the first generation of African philosophers by searching for the possibilities of engaging the storehouse of ideas in the oral tradition of Africa.

Using the hermeneutic approach, a Philosophy for Children in Africa should start from a recovery and reclamation of the cultural assets of traditional Africa, which then become the objects of its interpretation. As Wiredu and Kresse (2003) point out, "...just narrating is not good enough, we have to interpret. Trying to interpret is actually getting conceptual" (n.p.). If we agree that philosophy is critical, then an African perspective of Philosophy for Children is not a repetitive narration of that tradition but rather a critical interpretation of it. I find a strong element of hybridity in hermeneutics in that it is a synergy of the critical-analytical approach and sage philosophy, as the sages are the guardians of the comprehensive traditional narratives. The rigour, coherence, systemacity and rationality embedded in professional philosophy as linguistic analysis, are employed to interpret the hidden meanings of the traditional materials. The goal of such an approach is to retrieve the African philosophical heritage for use in contemporary times. I endorse Ladriere's (1992) conclusion that "...a hermeneutic procedure is the appropriate way to ensure an authentic encounter between the product of a cultural tradition and the demands of a rational understanding" (p.xxi). This is demonstrated in the illustrations below.

Equally, by engaging the hermeneutical-narrative perspective in doing philosophy with children, it is one way of rejecting the hegemonic tendencies left behind by colonialism in Africa. Earlier, I made a point that the West's domination of the intellectual discourse should be repudiated and I consider the hermeneutic approach as a handy method and a vital tool for Africans to liberate philosophy from the absolutist shackles associated with Western discourse. Modernism's emphasis on pure analysis and strict rationalism as the only appropriate method of doing philosophy is being rejected by postmodernist thinkers on Africa. But, the question is: How and why should the hermeneutic method surpass what earlier methods have failed to achieve? I argue that the method is unique in that it answers the questions the preceding methods have failed to address, especially the use of traditional ways of thinking in contemporary times. In the context of

Philosophy for Children, I recognise in the hermeneutic-narrative approach a reaction to the criticisms that have been levelled against any forms of doing philosophy in general in Africa and Philosophy for Children in particular. The approach may be used to debunk earlier philosophers' dismissal of the African perspective on doing philosophy as uncritical, unsystematic and romantic gaze at Africa's past. I lay the blame for such a misrepresentation of the African philosophical treasure house on the sweeping generalisation earlier interpreters of African tradition used to rubbish anything as unphilosophical each time their minds could not decipher it. I shall demonstrate in a later section of this study how philosophical activity was carried through stories, proverbs, songs, riddles and poems. While an argument against the traditional African ways of doing philosophy may be that it lacks the critical component, a rebuttal to that is the assertion that hermeneutics settles in with the critical aspect of the cultural heritage. Hermeneutics engages the critical, rigorous and systematic criteria to understand better the beliefs, and traditions of a society in order to live an examined and therefore better life.

As has been pointed out in Part 1, the question of the nature of philosophy, and whether or not it is scientific, is a complex meta-philosophical question. However, whether any philosophy in contemporary Africa should take the strictly scientific route and avoid any business with traditional culture is quite a challenge. If we can agree that African philosophy is a response to the cultural identity crisis and that its discourse is to reconnect philosophy with indigenous intellectual practices located in a place and its culture, then an African perspective of Philosophy for Children should do the same. Given the comprehensive mythological narratives in the form of tales, proverbs, pithy sayings and songs as the archives of the African philosophical heritage, an African perspective of Philosophy for Children will adopt a hybridised hermeneutic narrative approach to critically, systematically and rigorously interpret these intellectual practices situated in Africa. One such illustration is how learners can use episodes from their local experiences coupled with the Lipmanian tools imported from the West. This is typical of the Badza/Chimombe case demonstrated earlier and more illustrations will be discussed.

Illustration 2. Badza/Chimombe – a typical philosophy lesson Grade 8

Classroom Setting: Together with the teacher, children sit in a circle either on chairs or on the floor without their desks.

Introduction: On reading or hearing any story, do you ever imagine some events that follow from the story or have questions that come to your head? Would your friend have the same thoughts as yours? Today we will share a story in which we will find out if we have any questions or thoughts.

Telling the story: The teacher may read the story and allow democratically chosen readers to read the dialogue. The teacher asks the learners to map out the central elements of the dialogue and what the whole episode entails.

Thinking time: Learners are asked about what they found puzzling or interesting in the episode with comments or questions raised noted on the board or large sheets of paper pasted on the wall.

Discussion: The discussion might involve **questioning**; for example: Why do you think Badza wanted compensation for his lost crops? Note that the questions for discussion are identified democratically from those selected by individuals or small groups. Taking turns, children provide logical **reasons** to support their judgements. Some children might ask for definitions to **clarify concepts** by making connections, distinctions and comparisons; eg *kugarisana* (harmonious living) and *kuregererana* (forgiveness). Learners may also **expand** on each others' ideas by sustaining and extending the lines of thought.

The facilitator's role of the teacher will involve asking discussion questions (and not providing answers) e.g.

Focusing questions: What do you think... (referring to a learner's name)?

Give us your view/opinion/ idea about this.

Reasoning Questions: Why do you say so? Give us your reasons.

Defining/clarifying questions: What do you mean by...? Can anyone explain to us?

Generating alternatives: Does anyone have a different idea/thought?

Sustaining the dialogue: Is there anyone who agrees/disagrees with...?

By looking at the process of philosophising as having a critical character, one finds this critical activity sensitive to context; not providing a room for receipts in form of ready-made texts, concepts, methods or values. Instead, if we are to develop a Philosophy for Children perspective that may be referred to as “African” the reality of each school and the children who attend it should be our prime point of reference. The themes and concepts that inform the content of the Philosophy for Children classes are inclined to start from the life and experience of the children and the life of the school. In this regard, I would challenge introducing Lipman’s texts and materials that do not concern the life and existential circumstances of the learners, teachers and the school itself. Introducing Philosophy for Children in Ovamboland or deep parts of KwaZulu-Natal, for example, through Lipman’s storybook *Harry Stottlemeier’s Discovery* or other storybooks, as well as picture books, videos and films about foreign situations and scenarios and using these stimuli for philosophical engagement with children in those contexts would be a cognitive assault on the minds of the learners. However, some proponents of such processes of exportation might argue that such materials yield appropriate stimuli for children to philosophise, given that philosophy derives from wonder, surprise, dissatisfaction and astonishment. Children, being inquisitive, question why things are the way they are by looking at the world around them. Life becomes the ambit of uncertainty in which children search to explore why we live the life we live and what other lives we could construct. Hence, this search should start from the context of the children themselves. Below I illustrate what I would use a short story to do philosophy with children in the senior-phase class.

Illustration 3 : Tsuro naSekuru Gudo

Sekuru Gudo vaizviidza muchenjeri mukuru mukati memhuka dzose dzesango. Naizvozvo Tsuroakaronga zano rekudzidzisa naro Gudo kuti haana uchenjeri. Tsuro aiziva kuti Sekuru Gudo munhuaifariara nzungu zvikuru saka akashanyira gudo kumba kwake akati “Munoda here nzungudzinonaka kwazvo Sekuru? Ndinoziva pane umwe munda wechembere une nzungu dzakanaka kwazvo. Muridzi wachembera zvekuti haachina samba rekukubatai” Gudo akati” Ndingafara kwazvo. Ininzungu ndinodzifarira. Nditaridze muzukuru”. Naizvozvo vaviri vakaenda kumunda kuye. Gudo achiona dzungu dzakanaka wakatanga kudzura achidya asi haana kupa Tsuro. Tsuro achiona zvakadai, nemuchivande akatsvaka rwodzi ndokutanga kusungirira muswe wa Sekuru Gudo pachitsiga chakanga chiri pedyo. “Uri kuiteyi nemuswe wangu?” Gudo akabvunza asina kumbo tarisa zvakange zvichiitika. “Ndiri kukubvisai inda sekuru,” Tsuro akapindura. Apo Tsuro aona anyatsosungira muswe zvakasimba akashevedzera achiti “He kumusha uko! Mbuya! Mbuya! Uyaiwo mundionere. Pane arikuba mumunda menyu. Manyai munda wopera nembavha.” Vakamhanya vakabata zimupuro reshamhu rokurova. Paakaona vachisvika Gudo akasiya nzungu akati atangise kutiza. Asi akaona mwise wake wakasungirirwa. Chembere yakazvambura Gudo zvakasimba. Apo Tsuro akanga akamira zvake achidambuka nekuseka.

“Rega zvako ndichakubata” Sekuru Gudo akadaro achibvira kuna Tsuro apo kachembere kaiwedzera kuzvambura. Nekurwadziwa, Gudo akadhonza mwise zvinesimba ndokudambura kubva pachitsiga pachibva pasara imwe nengo yemwise wake. Akadzingirira Tsuro kusvika kwasviba achitadza kumubata kusvikira Tsuro apinda mumwena wakanga uri padyo. Gudo akaenda hake kumba kundopodza chigutsa chemwise wake wakange wasara.

Tsuro akazobuda mumwena apo Gudo anga aenda ndokuenda kumunda kuye paiva nechitsiga ndokutora kanhengo kemwise wa Gudo wakange

wasara. Akasvika kumba ndokuchekera mwise uya muhari, ndokuisa murivo netumwe tunononaka. Akasiya zwichibikana ndokuenda kwa Sekuru Gudo. Gudo paakangoona Tsuru akazara neshungu ndokuti “Eheka ndimi va Tsuru vakusungirira mwise wangu pachitsiga. Waida kundiurayisa nekachembere kaya? Dai ndangandisina kutoita zvekudambura ndingadai ndakafa”.

Tsuru akadzungudza akati “Chokwadi sekuru mungafungirawo here ini muzukuru wenyu? Apa makarasika kuti ndingave ini. Inga munoziva wani kuti Tsuru dzakafanana”. Tsuru akaratidza kushungurudzika kuti hama yake Gudo anga awira dambudziko rakadai. Izvi zvakapa Gudo kuti abvume: “Chokwadi ndeimwe tsuru kwete iwewe muzukuru wangu kwaye.”

“Ndinoda kukutaridzai nhasi rudo rwangu kwamuri Sekuru,” Tsuru akavimbisa. “Kwangu kwaita mabiko. Handei Sekuru tindosvuvura kwangu”. Vakatorana voenda. Vosvika kwakaita kunhuhwira kwechikafu chakanaka. Sekuru Gudo havana kunonoka. Vakatora zishizha ziguru ndokuzvipakuririra vachisarudza nhango huru. Vakatanga kuchachura vachidya sevanodzingirirwa. Apo Tsuru anga akangotarisa seasina zvake hanya. “He hee! Uya uone. Nhasi sekuru vonakirwa nemwise wavo” Tsuru akaseka. Sezvo sekuru Gudo vanga vakasimbirira pakudya havana kunzwa. “Watiiko muzukuru?”

“Ndati manga makanaka kwazvo mazuva amaiva nemwise wenyu”, akapindura Tsuru. Gudo akaenderera mberi achifamba nendima yake yekudya apo Tsuru akapamhazve arikumashure kwaGudo. “Ho Ho! sekuru vatapirirwa nemwise wavo”

“Urikuti chiiko iwe. Kutu ndirikudya mwise wangu?” Gudo akadongorera muhari akaona kanhango kemwise wake kakayangara mukati memuto. Neshungu Gudo akatora hari iya ndookuiteura achizvipisa makumbo nomuto. Akatanga kudzingirira Tsuru. Tsuru akasveverera mumwena. Asi Gudo akakwanisa kubata gumbo raTsuru rekumashure. Achiona izvozvo Tsuru akati “Ho Ho nzve-ee. Sekuru vabata mudzi womuti uri pedyo neni

vachiti igumbo rangu. Indi ndaenda mumwena". Gudo rakaregedza gumbo riye ndookubata mudzi Tsuro ndokupukunyuka achipinda mumwena. Gudo akaramba akarinda mwena achitonhorwa apo Tsuro anga akatozipeta zvake akazorora. Sekuru Gudo akatozodzokera hake kumba apo mvura yanga yonyanya kunaya. Akandorondedzera mudzimai wake kushinirwa kwaangaaitwa naTsuro. Kubvira ipapo Gudo naTsuro havaonani nemhosva yeudzenga hwaTsuro.

Tsuro and Uncle Baboon

Uncle Baboon was so proud that he was the smartest and most cunning animal in the jungles of Africa, so Tsuro, the hare, thought of how he could teach him a good lesson. Baboon was well known for his greed. Tsuro, then, one day invited baboon to one old woman's matured groundnuts garden. "I know of one garden where there are some ready groundnuts. The field is owned by an old woman who is incapable of catching up with you even if she were to find you in her field," Tsuro said to baboon. "Would you mind if I show you?"

"Indeed, I like groundnuts so much as you know". So, off they went. Uncle Baboon was so impressed by the well-tended nuts. On sight, he quickly started to dig up the nuts, which he greedily ate. While concentrating on his newly found delicacy, Tsuro went round baboon's back and pulled out a tree strap which he used to tie Gudo's tail to the nearby tree stump.

"What are you doing to my tail, Nephew Tsuro?" Baboon asked. "I am helping you by picking up and removing lice from your nice tail," Tsuro replied. Each proceeded with what they were busy on – baboon on the groundnuts and Tsuro on tying Gudo's tail to the stump. Assured that the tail was firmly tied, Tsuro called out loudly: "H-e-ee out there! Old woman, there is someone stealing your groundnuts". On hearing the alert call, the old woman came running with a huge stick in hand. Baboon dropped all that he was doing and tried to run for safety. But, with the tail firmly tied, he could

not move until the old woman arrived only to give him a good hiding. Meanwhile Tsuru was laughing his lungs out. Baboon yelled out at him, "Wait until I am freed from this." As the old woman lashed baboon even harder, baboon forcibly pulled and unleashed his tail from the stump but not without leaving the last end still tied to the stump. He chased Tsuru but without success. Tsuru managed to escape into the nearby burrow. Baboon went home to nurse the bleeding tail minus part of it left on the stump.

Later in the day, Tsuru crawled out of the burrow and went to the stump where part of baboon's broken tail remained tied. He untied the broken tail and together with some herbs and vegetables and a few pieces of biltong, he cooked it to make a pleasant stew. He left the broth simmering and proceeded to baboon's home. Upon sight of Tsuru, Uncle baboon fumed with rage: "You Tsuru, do you know that had I not broken off my tail that you tied to the tree, that old woman would have killed me?" Cunningly Tsuru replied shaking his head "It could not be me. I could not do that to a friend like you. It could be another hare and not me. Do you know that all hares look alike?" Beaten to it, Baboon accepted by acknowledging: "Perhaps it was another hare. Certainly hares do all look alike."

Tsuru then proceeded to invite Baboon to a feast as a way of demonstrating their closeness. He said: "To prove my friendship to you, I am inviting you to a pleasant feast at lunch." Together they went to Tsuru's home, and as they drew closer, the nice aroma of the simmering food caught Baboon's appetite. He pulled out a large leaf from a tree (which he was to use as a plate) and cut a hollow tree buck for dishing out the food. Upon arrival, Baboon went straight to the big pot and started serving himself meanwhile salivating. He greedily ate the food without much attention to his host. Meanwhile, Tsuru started giggling "He! Heee! Uncle baboon is eating his tail." But, Baboon missed the joke as he was busy on the stew. He asked Tsuru to repeat himself. Misleadingly, Tsuru replied: "I was saying you had a handsome look when you used to have your whole tail." While Baboon

continued with his food, behind his back, Tsuro repeated his mischievous statement: “He! Heee! Uncle baboon is eating his tail.”

“You said I am eating my tail?” Upon closer look inside the relish pot, Baboon recognised pieces of his own tail floating in the pot. In a feat of rage, Baboon jumped up to upset the pot only as far as his own legs, which were scalded in the process. He chased after Tsuro who managed to escape into a nearby burrow though Baboon won by catching his rear claw. But Tsuro outsmarted Baboon with a long laugh: “Ho! Ho! Hoodoo! Uncle baboon thinks he has caught me yet he is only holding on to a small root next to my hind leg.” Angered by this, Baboon left alone Tsuro’s leg only to hold on to the root and Tsuro slipped into the burrow. He rested comfortably and safely while Baboon waited outside, cold, angry, injured and scalded hoping Tsuro would come out. After a long wait and a lashing by a heavy thunderstorm, he left for home to report to his wife how Tsuro had deceived him. To date Baboon and Tsuro are perennial enemies. (English translation mine)

Stories such as the one above personified animal characters were often told explaining the peculiar trait of each animal, but also transmitting the virtues valued by the society. Debates then ensued coupled with a critical exploration of contestable and central concepts such as greed, egotism, disobedience, honesty, faithfulness, justice, responsibility, love, hatred and beauty, to mention a few. Just like the earlier illustration for the rural high school described for character of how a philosophical community of inquiry can be facilitated, the earlier is an example of traditional African stories told around a fire with an elder (grandfather or grandmother or any other elderly relative in the extended family). Of note is that just like in the Lipmanian community of inquiry discussed, the story is the stimulus that invites children to ask open questions. However, the facilitation process differs in that reasonably heavy-handed group control characterised the traditional African community of inquiry, while the opposite is the basis of the Lipmanian view as discussed earlier. In addition, while criticism, open-mindedness and systematic thinking are highly cherished in the latter model, the former is directed at strengthening *ukama as the product* of communal living as well as *ukama*

as a process that helps to develop a united community and critical individuals who contribute to successful communal living. The goal for both is to promote the development of both the cognitive as well as the affective domain of the child. But, I draw special attention to the language used as well as the context in which the philosophical enterprise takes place. The latter implies that children are exposed to the day-to-day experiences although there are abstract, hypothetical issues, which should not distract the inquiry in the first case. The critical element is the questions the children will ask as a way of inquiry. The experiences of life in a communalistic (almost) traditional African village characterised by relationships (*ukama*) and *kugarisana* (peaceful coexistence) is depicted in the *Tsuro* and *Uncle Baboon*. Children, inquiring together, will benefit more from a local story and local situations than they would from imported or foreign Lipmanian materials such *Harry Stottlemeier's Discovery* or *Suki*.

The method of building a philosophical community of inquiry described in the *Badza/Chimombe* case can again be employed in the case of *Tsuro* and *Uncle Baboon*. The story can be used as a stimulus for learners to engage in a dialogical enterprise with a focus on some of the following central but contestable concepts that form children's daily experiences, in this case greed, egoism, deceit, justice, faithfulness, honesty and love. Children will find in the story some puzzling events that demand answers. Hence, they will raise questions. The questions are then structured democratically. By following the most agreed choices, children will remain with one or two central issues, which then become the theme for philosophical discussion in a community of peers. The built community of inquiry will, in the final analysis, enhance in the young minds the ability to imagine, creatively, to criticise and to be criticised, and to collaborate with their mates, as well as to care for their thinking and the thinking of others.

While the above has dwelt at length on the place of situating Philosophy for Children in Africa in the existential locus of the Africans as well as their cultural milieu, I add language as an aspect that improves philosophical competitiveness, especially since "it is within language that we dream, desire, have a consciousness and where images are located" (Nakusera, 2004, p. 131). As Obotetukudo (2001) puts it, "Language affords a window into the views and beliefs of a people, and hence their philosophies" (p. 42).

Since language is both part of the culture and the medium through which culture is transmitted, serious deliberations about the policy as regards the place of indigenous languages in education must form part of the rethinking of education in Africa. This is particularly so because the language policies we adopt will have an impact on curriculum, pedagogy and access (Bunyi, 1999). Given that Africa and more particularly Sub-Saharan Africa "...is probably the most linguistically complex area of the world, if population is measured against languages" (Spencer, 1985, p. 387), the question then is: Whose language should be used in the multilingual classroom? Besides, where a widely spoken indigenous language is the lingua franca, there is also the former colonial power's language. Consequently, the question of the educational role of the various languages (African indigenous languages, the lingua franca and the colonial languages) has attracted the attention of and posed some challenges to policy makers and educators alike.

The Lipmanian texts are written "...in the context of a typically North American understanding of critical thinking and democracy..." (Rivage-Seul, 1987a, p. 233). As sources of stories for philosophical discussion, I find the texts lacking in sensitivity to the history of the learners as well as the institutional contexts in which philosophising takes place. If they are transferred as they are to contexts outside the United States of America where they were written for they will lack relevance. Besides, Lipman's version of Philosophy for Children is preoccupied with impartiality and abstract reasoning, which characterises Western liberal democratic thinking. As Kohan (1995) puts it, "...simply thinking critically about thinking itself does not adequately fulfil philosophy's potential" (p. 28). Instead, Philosophy for Children "...should extend the criticism that it applies to thinking to the reality that has nurtured and contributed to forming those modes of thinking" (ibid). There is a need to include in the hybridisation of an African Philosophy for Children critical thinking skills informed by relevant contextual detail. This involves, as will be demonstrated later, the use of traditional African philosophical narratives such as poems, songs, stories and riddles. An African perspective of Philosophy for Children, in allocating a central role to critical inquiry, can only be authentic if it interrogates the African existential situation both in its past and the contemporary, thereby desisting from "...shielding social institutions from social

scrutiny” (p.30). In other words, an African perspective of doing philosophy with children will be a hybrid, with the Lipmanian model offering the tools and critical perspective and the African experience providing the content and context of field. As I have already discussed, the traditional African background is rich with ritual celebrations of community, with the attendant stress on individual commitment to the well-being of the collective, empathetic relations with others (*ukama*) and the improvement of everyone’s well-being through community dedication by each individual. Given that the traditional African worldview cherishes community ethos, the traditional Africa paradigm contributes the essential role of *community* to complement the Lipmanian notion of critical rational *inquiry* for the construction of a new paradigm of Philosophy for Children in Africa. In the new scheme, which I propose, I suggest a new complementary weaving of both the critical/analytical component and the particularist/culturalist element as equally valuable constituents of a hybridised African perspective of philosophy for children. Notwithstanding the possibilities of contradiction and conflict, as will be discussed later, this proposal appears justifiable if doing philosophy with children in Africa is to be freed of the negative effects of cultural imperialism on the one hand and ethnocentrism on the other.

I agree with Lena Green (1997), who has ascribed to Philosophy for Children a liberatory potential with specific reference to South Africa. I share her view that it would be difficult, if not implausible, to implement Philosophy for Children in South Africa in the Lipmanian perspective. Yet, Green (1997) also argues that it is “...difficult to create an *entirely* new South African philosophy for children which even approached the conceptual sophistication of the original” (p. 22) (*emphasis mine*). The importation of philosophical materials from outside the context of Africa ignores the likelihood that African philosophies and epistemologies have theoretical sophistication as a par with those of Western thought. Equally, one would pose the question of relevance. What influence will the foreign materials and tools form the stimulus for philosophical thinking with children in Africa? Yet, I have so far illustrated how using local materials, drawn from the African cultural circumstances and written in the language commonly employed by the learners, can be used to do philosophy with children in an African setting. Given the above, what alternatives are left for an African Philosophy for

Children materials? I see four choices. The first is to translate Lipman's novels into the main language of the specific country, including the manuals as well as the accompanying supplementary proposals, for discussion by teachers and children. The second is to adapt the content of Lipman's novels to the local culture through the transformation of certain incidents in ways that make them relevant to the culture, traditions and context of the country concerned. The third is writing new-look Lipman style novels envisaged in terms of the same objectives for engaging in the same activity, though founded in the specific culture of the country involved. The fourth is to produce new supporting material based on Lipman's material, including picture books, comic books or other audiovisual materials, as indicated earlier on. The common thread across the alternatives above, except the first, is that Philosophy for Children should be particular to a cultural context and, in this case, it should meet the existential conditions of Africa.

Elsewhere, David Kennedy and Walter Kohan's (2001) assessment of the implementation of Philosophy for Children in China concluded that the Chinese "...were very emphatic in pointing out that they wished to introduce and practise Philosophy for Children in a manner which is coherent with their own tradition" (Kennedy & Kohan, 2001, p. 41). While I acknowledge an advantage in using the imported Lipman material in the context of Africa, especially with due recognition of diversity, I simultaneously find further problems with the move to adopt these material and methods. Literature on the African tradition has been written in the languages and in the conceptual frameworks of the colonising nations and, as a result, I concur with the Wiredu (2007) position that "Any African who tries to think through them in his or her own language is likely to find quite a large chunk of those frameworks incoherent" (p. 75). By philosophising in a foreign language, one engages that language as a medium of thought. This presents challenges in that the categories of thought so embedded in the language become natural and unavoidable. Hence, Wiredu makes a clarion call for conceptual self-exorcism, which he refers to as conceptual decolonisation⁵³. It follows

⁵³ See Cultural Universals and Particulars: an African perspective (Nyasani, 1989).

that there is a need to examine more tightly and critically whether the languages in which material written are relevant to African conditions. A conceptually decolonised Philosophy for Children project is not about aping Lipman's material. Rather, the proposed programme for children in Africa should be built on material based on the thoughts and language rooted in the African existential situation, to be authentic. The materials will include proverbs, maxims, popular doctrines and various narratives with African roots. Illustrations of how proverbs can be used in doing philosophy in schools will be given below.

Scholars⁵⁴ of African traditions have contrasted the wisdom models of Western cultures with African cultures and concluded that proverbs, as a form of ancient wisdom, are well-esteemed in African cultures. This is, however, frequently disregarded by Western cultures that prefer a wisdom paradigm of propositional knowledge. Yet, as Kanu sees it, pre-colonial African culture was characterised by an oral tradition that found expression in stories, folk tales, anecdotes, proverbs and parables that provoked a great deal of reflection, as will be demonstrated in the later sections (Kanu, 2007). Bodunrin (1991) maintains that proverbs serve a philosophical purpose in African philosophy. He writes:

“There is no *a priori* reason why proverbs, myths of gods and angels, social practices... could not be proper subjects for philosophical enquiry... The African philosopher cannot *deliberately* ignore the study of the traditional belief system of his people. Philosophical problems arise out of real-life situations.” (p. 76-77)

Traditional Africans had no written records and therefore all that has been preserved of their knowledge, myths, philosophies, liturgies, songs and sayings has been handed down by word of mouth from generation to generation (Kanu, 2007). Proverbs are open-ended and straightforwardly vague. As Fajana (1986) suggests, “...proverbs constitute an important intellectual mode of communication... to develop the child's reasoning power and skill in expressing the deeper thoughts most essential in settling

⁵⁴ See Chimhundu,(1980), Christensen(1958), Gyekye (1995), Nussbaum, (2000)

disputes and in decision making processes” (p.45). When used with children, just as with adults, they allow the participants in the deliberative encounter to be reflective, while making sense of the hidden meanings embedded within. The hidden meanings invite contests of ideas and, in the process, knowledge as shared understanding results and both the self and the group are developed (Obotetukudo, 2001). These proverbs are appropriate to specific topics and themes that the community members intuitively understand. In Reagan’s (2005) categorisation of the Zulu proverbs, one singles out proverbial sayings whose central concepts revolve around treatment of people (*ubuntu*), faithfulness, deception, cunning behaviour, friendship and enmity (*ubuhlobo nobutha*), good fortune, misfortune, uncertainty, failure and encouragement (*impumelelo, inhlanhla, namashwa*), to mention but a few. Given the width and depth of the African proverb, I see no justification for not engaging them as stimulus for philosophic inquiry by children in a classroom community of inquiry.

Proverbial lore, like all other forms of orality in traditional societies, follows hidden conventions of operation, order of things, content appropriateness and timeliness; they are ritualized and routinized (Obotetukudo, 2001). A challenge to this view is that such rigidity of their performance could act to discourage critical judgement. However, they are focal points in the tradition, and thus imbibe the norms and beliefs of a group. Their orality preserved the history of the people, their general outlook on life, and their conduct and moral values, and communities used these forms as a means for the education of the young (Kanu, 2003). This form of teaching was, and perhaps still is, only part of the general social orientation of the individual and was intended particularly for society’s younger members. Stories that humanised animal characters were frequently told and, while illuminating the particular feature of each animal, these stories also passed on the values cherished by the society. Key moral as well as philosophical debates then followed, coupled with exploration of contestable and central concepts as greed, egotism, disobedience, honesty, faithfulness, justice, responsibility, love, hatred and beauty, to mention only a few.

Illustration 4 *Tsumo* (*Proverbs*)

- (1) *Chembere masikati / usiku imvana* (An old woman is [identified] during the day / at night she is a young mother);
- (2) *Itsitsi dzei / tsvimborume kubvisa chana chemvana madzihwa?* (What kindness is it / for the bachelor to wipe mucus off the face of a young woman's child?);
- (3) *Manatsamukanwa / harahwa kurota ichiyamwa* (It gives the mouth a nice taste / for an old man to suck the breast in his dreams) (Adapted from Chimhundu, 1980);
- (4) *Aiva madziva ava mazambuko / aiva mazambuko ava madziva* (What were deep pools are now crossing places / what were crossing places are now deep pools);
- (5) *Chaitemura chava kuseva / chaiseva chava kutemura sadza* (He who used to have his "dry" now has it with relish / he who used to have it with relish now has it "dry");
- (6) *Apunyaira / haashayi misodzi* (One who has become emotionally upset / does not lack tears; viz. Exertion brings some reward);
- (7) *Chafamba kamwe / hachiteyewi* (Something that has passed only once / is not trapped; viz. A single transgression is not taken serious account of);
- (8) *Ateyera mariva murutsva / haachatyi mhapa kusviba* (One who has set traps in burnt grass / no longer fears his apron getting dirty; viz. A man must take the consequences of his actions);
- (9) *Panodya ishe / varanda vanodyawo* (When the chief eats / the subjects eat as well; viz. The office of the chief benefits his people);
- (10) *10)Nzombe huru / yakabva mukurerwa* (A big bull / resulted from being nurtured; viz. Big results have small but indispensable beginnings); and
- (11) *Matende mashava / anovazva doro* (Pretty calabashes / sour the beer; viz. Attractive appearances conceal inner flaws. All is not gold that glitters) (Fortune, 1975 - 6).

Or a single proverb covering other related proverbial sayings may be offered for learners to dialogue on for a 30-minute lesson with a high-school class. A typical example is one below:

Kure ndokusina, kwachiri unofa wasvika. (*Far is where there is nothing, where something is that you will struggle to the death to reach. Where there is a will there is a way*).

The “nothing” and “something” connoted by the proverb is “value”. People always put in effort where there is value. If there is nothing of value to the individual, then such a thing remains unsought for, far out of reach. On the other hand, where consequence is valuable, all means and effort at the disposal of the individual will be gathered to achieve it, thus nullifying the common understanding of “far”. The one aiming for the valued goal will expend effort even to death to reach it.

Traditionally, the Shona people in Zimbabwe used several variations of this proverb such as:

1. *Kure ndokuna mai, kunemukadzi unofa waswika.*

Far is where mother is; where there is the woman you love you will expend all effort, even to death, to get there. (Literal English translation)

2. *Kure kwegava ndokusina mukubvu.*

It is far for the jackal where there is no mukubvu fruit tree. (Literal English translation) (Mzungu, 2002).

Through observing the jackal, the Shona people established *hubvu*, the fruit of the *mukubvu* tree, as the animal’s favourite fruit. What the variations illustrate is that values differ from situation to situation: for a man, the love for his wife or girlfriend surpasses that for his mother; for the jackal it is love for the *hubvu* fruit. It is the sought-after goals that determine the time and

effort to be expended and also one's priorities.

From the point of view of their literary-aesthetic qualities, *tsumo* are aphorisms with deep metaphorical meaning and are brief in expression (Chimhundu, 1980). From another point of view, i.e. that of the indirect manner in which the meaning is arrived at, their symbolism, as elsewhere in folklore, enables the speakers to provide sociological models which aid them in inculcating traditional values in their young people and in reaffirming these values and beliefs for the pleasure and remembrance of adults. The following can be a discussion plan using proverbs as stimuli.

Illustration 5. Use of Proverbs in a classroom community of inquiry

Discussion Plan

Classroom setting: The whole class sits in a circle including the teacher. Children are asked to re-sort the sitting arrangement – it could be by voluntary persuasion to do so, or the teacher designs a polite way of moving friends and associates from each other.

Introduction: In our homes, we at times use certain statements to emphasise what we intent to say, or illustrate certain means as well as hide some details in what we want to say. Such items we call them *tsumo* (proverbs). Today we want to discuss some of these.

Discussion: Learners pairs are given bold markers and large sheets of paper on which they write two most interesting proverbs they know. All the selected proverbs are then displayed on a board. Learners are asked to vote for two most exciting proverbs that they would like to discuss in the session coupled with a justification of their choices. These are then written in bold print and displayed.

Questions:

- *Which of the two is more interesting?*
- *Why do you think Proverb X is more interesting?*
- *What are your reasons?*
- *Can P explain the meaning of ...?*
- *Which other proverb is similar to it?*
- *In our daily lives how do you use Proverb C?*
- *Who would like to challenge what Z has proposed?*
- *How do you rate the view of M?*
- *Do you have any alternative views?*
- *Who would like to summarise what we have said so far?*
- *Anyone who thinks differently?*

Of significance, proverbs will contribute to philosophising on condition that learners are encouraged to engage critically with the received wisdom lest in ordinary day-to-day classes in most schools they are merely memorised for the purpose of passing a standardised test. Yet, they have an implicit and explicit philosophical value in children if used as shown in the illustration above. Also note the democratic nature of both the inquiry process and the facilitation of the dialogue.

Riddles, among other things, form part of a plethora of ways through which the traditional Africans not only sharpened the reasoning skills of the young but also provided entertainment to participants. Through the search for solutions to riddles, children are challenged to think more abstractly with depth and breadth while their figurative language gives the child the chance to uncover their meaning through a reasoning process. The answer to a given riddle acts as a conclusion of the logical process and it is often a one-word answer, which is both precise and clear to the participants. Among the Shona, according to Gwaravanda and Masaka (2008), "...riddles promote logical skills and the one who is capable of solving many riddles is arguably more mentally sophisticated than the one who is less capable" (p. 194). Thus, the formulation and provision of solutions to riddles was an instrument through which rational skills were developed among traditional Africans. My experience as a growing

child among the Shona reminds me of how, around a fire at night and under the tutelage of our grandfather, riddles were a crucial tool in imparting and sharpening our reasoning and memory skills. Being able to provide correct answers to the tribal riddles was considered a sign of wit. We would consider different alternatives, probabilities and possibilities through repeated questioning in our attempts to solve the riddles. I have since recognised that the Shona riddles engage participants in logical reasoning if by logic is meant “...a means to help us reason correctly and efficiently in the attainment of truth” (Maritain, 1979, p. 109).

The Shona riddles vary in content though reasoning is what they seek to enhance in children with known cases providing information about unknown ones. One can refer to them as arguing from analogy. Some of the categories include riddles as illustrated below.

Illustration 6 *Zvirahwe* (Riddles)

1) Based on natural phenomena

Munin'ina wangu haasiyani neni (my young brother/sister who does not leave me)

Answer: (*mumvuri*) human shadow

2)Based on the animal world

Kamusikana kakasunga muchiuno (the small girl with a tightly tied waist)

Answer: *Igo* (a wasp)

3)Based on crops and other foods

Mai vangu kutsvuka asi kuroya chete (though light (literally red) in

complexion, my mother is a witch)

Answer: Red chilli pepper

4)Based on the human body

Mombe dzababa vangu chenachena dzoga dzoga (my father's cattle that are exclusively white in colour)

Answer: Human teeth

The following format may be adapted from an infant class to through to high-school although the depth of abstraction increases with the increase in gradation:

1. In pairs children exchange a few riddles which they note down on a large sheet of paper from which they identify their best two.
2. The whole class is then seated in a circle with each pair reading out their two most challenging riddles.
3. Democratically, the whole class votes for the best two or three riddles.
4. The facilitator, in this case the teacher, gets the dialogue by inviting children to draw some interesting questions based on the central, contestable concepts that are embedded in the riddles.

The essence of the riddle in the context of the Shona is for the child to consider alternatives that resemble the real object referred to and in the process of inferring the answer; the child must imagine any possible objects whose behaviour or characteristics relate with those in the analogy. The child gets at the most appropriate answer to the given riddle by working through the possibilities. In the final analysis it incorporates “logical elimination of inappropriate answers to a given riddle on the basis of a reasoned analogy” (Gwaravanda & Masaka, 2008, p. 27). Of significance is the situatedness of the objects of discussion. Children will draw from their African background for deliberation in the community of inquiry.

Another illustration would be the use of the poem as stimulus to initiate a community of inquiry in the classroom. Bhera (1979) wrote the poem '*Muzukuru Zwawava Kuenda kuHarare*' in which he takes the role of the grandfather (*sekuru*) teaching the grandson (*muzukuru*). One of the things that the grandson should be careful about was the prostitute as he migrates to a new life in metropolitan Harare.

Illustration 7 *Nhetembo* (The Poem)

Siyana navo vakapikira upfambi,
Ravo basa ngerokujuruja mari,
Ziva kuti pfambi haina nyasha, pfambi muroyi,
Chandinokuudza ndeichi, ukaona mukadzi akanaka, tiza (Bhera, 1979, p. 13)
.
Avoid these ordained prostitutes
Their task is to fish money
Be warned! A prostitute is merciless; she is a witch,
What I tell you is this: If you see a beautiful woman run away [from her].

A short paragraph from a poem as shown above would be ideal for adolescents in a peri-urban high school whose envioning community is characterised by a life in transition between the urban and the rural; between the traditional African cultures and the modern, industrialised urban life. Children would engage each other rigorously basing on their experiences. High-school students would raise some interesting philosophical questions founded on some contestable concepts centred on prostitution, morality, deceit, mercy, witchcraft, beauty and disease (for example HIV/Aids).

Zinyoka Mugumbeze (Big Snake in Bed)

Ndainge ndiri ishe zvake, Muzvinanyika,

Ndiri ndoga chikara kubva kudoro.
 Chakanga chakandikiya kuti shwe,
 Hwahwa hwaVaMuchikunye chipanda.
 Ndaingunotsika matama enzira
 Kudzadzarika.
 Svikei mugota mangu surururu,
 Rupasa rwangu chee, gumbeze pamusoro wazviona,
 Hope dzikati tasvikawo changamire,
 Hezvi ndava mungoro yavaShakabvu chinyeponyepo
 Ndakatanga kunzwa kuti nyau nyau nyau.
 Chati chi pepuka chikati nhasi,
 Iro gara riya tsvimbo nyoro ronditekenyedza,
 Roteseketera kupfuura napaguvhu rangu,
 Ndongonzwa kuti nyau nyau nyakata nhonhoo-nho.
 Kuti chi pepuka wanei midzimu yandikaka mbira dzakondo
 fieri rojakacha mugumbeze rangu pasinai mugombedzi,
 Ropikita kutsvaka zvinoda mwoyo waro.
 Rakazoti rava muhuro mangu zinyakatira,
 Pfungwa dzangu dzakaungana chiriporipo
 Meso angu kuti bhaa, hana kurova hecho chigayo.
 Ndakanyatsosimudza ruoko rwangu zvinyai
 Ndokuwerevedza kutsvaka musorowaro,
 Ndokuti tsvanzvadzirei, tsvanzvidzirei, tsvanzva!

Ndokuti 'Makara asionani'!

Ndiye tsuku tsuku tsuku. .. dzamara fototo (Hamutyinei, 1969, p. 25)

I was the chief, owner of the land,

Alone from a beer-party.

I was undone by beer,

The beer was at Muchikunye's.

I was staggering along the path.

I entered my hut,

Spread the mat, got under the blanket,

Sleep quickly visited me.

I feigned death for a while.

I started feeling a cold sensation.

I couldn't wake up,

The cold stick of the wilds was tickling me,

It slithered past my navel.

The sensation was very cold.

I could not wake up, the ancestral spirits suppressed me.

It surveyed my bed without being checked,

It busily went on looking for the desires of its heart.

When the cold was close to my neck,

I suddenly recollected my thoughts,

My eyes shot wide open, my heart beat very fast.

Furtively, I moved my hand,
I went on groping
And then we clashed!
I stealthily groped for its head,
searched and searched and then . . .
I said, “two hostile forces have met!”
I squashed and squashed and squashed... until it stopped wriggling
(Chiwome, 1992, pp. 7-8)

The above is yet another illustration of a long Shona poem, which might invite a whole range of questions, especially with adolescents. The narrator provides a description of his drunken return from a beer party and his encounter with a snake in his bed, painting a theatrical picture of a drunken man staggering home, making his bed and going to sleep. Next he describes how he was swiftly shaken out of state of unconsciousness and intoxication by a cold sensation which he identified as a poisonous snake. He then brags how he takes the snake by surprise and strangles it to death. Both the reader and audience are taken through an intense, dreadful encounter of a snake at close range. The reader empathises with the narrator and the tension experienced by the narrator is relieved by the reader. The build-up and ensuing release of tension experienced in the reading (or hearing) of the poem relieves the audience of boredom or bad temper. Hence for Chiwome, “...this was the function of such poetry at the village council” (Chiwome, 1992, p. 8). He adds that “...enjoyment of the poem may also be derived from the double meaning suggested in the word used for snake; “zinyoka”, apart from its literal meaning, may also be a penis” (ibid). When interpreted accordingly the meaning of the poem changes, reducing the encounter to a ridiculous, drunken self-victimisation. The second interpretation might not only ignite dialogue among high-school students but might also be a source of enjoyment. A similar fashion in the Tsuro and Gudo episode discussed earlier may be useful.

Given the above, there is possible conflict of interests with regard to the language of use. The question is: In which language should the philosophy materials based on

traditional proverbs and riddles as well as other forms of narratives be availed for use by children? This draws in the challenge of the relativity of languages. My position is that the vernacular should be given precedence. My position is informed by Whorf's (1956) thesis on language in which he writes:

...language is not merely a reproducing instrument for voicing ideas but rather is itself the shaper of ideas, the programme and guide for the individual's mental activity, for his analysis of impressions, for his synthesis of his mental stock in trade... We dissect nature along lines laid down by our native language... We cut nature up, organise it into concepts, and ascribe significance as we do, largely because we are parties to an agreement to organise it in this way — an agreement that holds throughout our speech community and is codified in the patterns of our language (p. 212-213).

I find the above argument convincing since every language influences its speakers to see, believe, hear, experience and interpret their world in certain ways particular to the language habits of their respective communities (ibid). Thus even non-written languages, including the African ones, have the potential as well as the purpose, to create meaning, knowledge and a philosophy to guide their ways of living, seeing and being relevant to experience.

Language use therefore influences the way humans everywhere think and classify their experiences. To start philosophy, I would argue, and to philosophise, one begins, as Wiredu & Kresse (2003) argue, "...within the language which one speaks, in which one perceives the world and with which one constructs the meaning of the world" (n.p). The wholesale importation of Lipman's material for the introduction of Philosophy for Children in Africa would be an open denigration of the rich store of literature, written and unwritten, available on the continent. This can form an enriched stimulus for philosophical thinking with children in Africa, especially when presented and used in the daily language of the learners. While there must be an honest appreciation of the Lipman initiative through the use of his manuals for the philosophical moves in particular and pedagogy in general, we ought to acknowledge that there are also local ways of doing philosophy with children and moves employed in traditional Africa,

which are relevant not only for Africa but also readily available for exportation to, and for use by, the Western counterparts engaged in Philosophy for Children. The use of traditional narratives, especially riddles, proverbs and legends, can also be tried in other parts of the globe to complement those already used for critical reasoning just as Africa needs to accommodate the values of critique, rationality and systemacity in thinking.

Illustration 8 A short story (Grade 1-3)

Mwedzi navakadzi vake vaviri

Mwari akasika murume akamutumidza kuti Mwedzi. Akazosikawo mukadzi akamuti Hweva ndokubva amupa kuna Mwedzi kuti ave mudzimai wake. Mwedzi aizogara naye kwemakore maviri apo aizodzokera hake kudenga. Usiku vairara vese mumba ma Mwedzi saka mangwana acho hweva akamuka dumbu rake rakazvimba. Akazosununguka mapundo nemiti yakasiyana-siyana. Makore maviri apera, Mwai akdana Hweva kudzokera kudenga. Akatumazve mumwe mukadzi. Vhenekerasvimborume kuti ave mudzimai wa Mwedzi uyo waazogarazve naye kwemakore maviri. Araazve na Mwedzi dumbu rake rakamuka razvimba akasunguka mombe, mbudzi, nemakwai. Mangwana acho akasununguka vakomana nevasikana. Mwari akazouya papera makore vaviri akati Vhenekera svimborume ngachidzokera hake kudenga asi Mwedzi wakara naye akazvara shuma, nyoka, zvinyavada nedzimwe mhuka dzinouraya. Naizvozvo Mwedzi wakaita ishe wenyika huru kwazvo.

Moon and his two wives

Mwari (God) made man whom he called Mwedzi (Moon). He then created a woman whom he called Hweva (Morning Star) and gave her to Mwedzi as wife. Mwedzi was going to live with her for only two years after which Hweva would return to heaven. At night in Mwedzi's hut the two slept together and the following morning Hweva's belly was hugely swollen. She gave birth to vegetation of all kind. When the two years were up Mwari

called Hweva back to heaven. He then sent another woman, Vhenekeratsvimborume (Evening Star) to be Mwedzi's wife whom again he was going to live with for two years. After sleeping with Mwedzi, Evening Star's belly became swollen and she gave birth to cattle, goats and sheep. The following morning she gave birth to boys and girls. Mwari came and said the two years were finished and Evening Star had to return to heaven, but Mwedzi slept with her and she gave birth to lions, leopards, snakes, scorpions and other dangerous creatures. Mwedzi became king of a large realm (Adopted from Musiyiwa, 2008).

While the story attempts to give an explanation of the origins of human beings, it also invites children's thirst on other puzzles such as why marriage started, why women become pregnant and give birth, how death came about and the origin of vegetation, rainfall and wild animals (Musiyiwa, 2008, p. n.p.). It also presents clarifications to the interchange and character of extraterrestrial bodies such as the moon and the stars. Again, children are introduced to their culture's religious beliefs. For a Shona child, Mwari is Musikavanhu (the Creator of Human Beings) and he lives in the skies, hence he is called Nyadenga (Owner of the Sky). While such etiological stories and creation myths may serve the purpose of ridding children's creative turbulence about the occurrences around them, it may also be used in the classroom as stimulus for doing philosophy with children in a junior class. Metaphysical and axiological questions may be raised by young learners such as:

How was I created? Who created me – my father and mother or God? Does God exist? What is existence? Is there a relationship between animals and me? Are they my relatives? A community of philosophical inquiry might be developed around the story, which might go even beyond a 40-minute lesson. The facilitator may also use the same story in a high school with more abstract concepts emerging, which invite critical and creative thinking from participants. The teacher as a facilitator may develop a community of philosophical inquirers in the classroom using the above story with children raising some amazing puzzling issues that will form an interesting background for critical, creative and caring thinking in children.

Illustration 9 *Nziyo Dzevana* (Children's Songs)

*Sipoti sipoti zangariyana,
Ndinotsvaga wangu,
Zangariyana,
Musuki wendiro,
Zangariyana,
Anodzichenesa,
Zangariyana,
Kuti mbembe,
Zangariyana, semwedzi wechirimo,
Zangariyana,
Aiwaiwa ndanga ndichireva uyu,
Simuka hande.*

Sport, sport get up and let's go,
I am looking for a partner,
A partner who will do the dishes,
Until they are clean,
And white like the moon,
In all that I meant this one (Muwati & Mutasa, 2008, p. 8).

Among the Shona children's games and songs offered, participants have the opportunity to make choices, especially in the context of ukama. Choices that individuals make in life are inextricably linked to the characteristic of one's life (Muwati & Mutasa, 2008). Once made, these choices have the power to extend or depreciate life. In the song *Sipoti*

zangariyana, as shown above, the problem or challenge is that of looking or searching for a suitable and capable partner. Muhwati and Mutasa elaborate a common Shona song especially sung by young children during play. They explain the song thus:

The lead singer, who is on a search mission, takes his or her time to settle for what he or she considers the best. As he or she leads the rest of the group in singing, he or she will be going right round the circle, carefully examining those present. He or she is not under any pressure from anyone and there is no outside influence. The circle makes it possible for him or her to see clearly all members on parade. Even if there is a person he or she already likes, the rules of the game make it imperative that there should be signs of serious search. The subject position of the children is seen in the fact that they communicate and express their creativity. For that reason, decisions should not be arrived at impetuously... By responding synchronously in the word *zangariyana*, he or she is urged to carry on. It also takes away the shame especially from those members who are not used to associating with the opposite sex. Songs like the one above, which are performed by both genders, also become a basis for effective gender socialisation. They underline the African worldview as cosmos. The children learn and appreciate that men and women are “pieces of each other”... In this case the interdependence of men and women and the need for complementary existence is designed, confirmed and celebrated... (and) that creativity should be understood in a broader sense that takes cognisance of the array of human needs and faculties as well as cultural pluralism (Muhwati & Mutasa, 2008, p. 8).

Such a song might be useful material for introducing the basic ground rules of *ukama* in the community of inquiry especially to junior class. A Philosophy for Children session might consist of:

1. Children seated in a circle on the floor *taking turns* as lead singers described above.
2. With *eye-to eye contact*, children have the chance to *make own choices*.
3. Children in small groups are asked to write down two things that interested them most in the song/game and construct questions from them.

4. Democratically, the class chooses the best question for discussion in the community of inquiry.
5. Possible central concepts that might emerge from the community — e.g. relationships, trust, interdependence, choice, equality and gender.

9.8 Challenges of the *ukama* ethic

In this section, I consider the potential dark side of the *ukama* ethic. I believe, as presented above, that Ukama in traditional African thought provides some constructive insights that enlighten and inform the critical issues in our quest for an African perspective of Philosophy for Children. However, I believe there are some implicit challenges that are associated with the ethic. The traditional African notion of community as discussed earlier to be the number one weakness. Communitarianism, on which the *ukama* ethic is founded, is nostalgic in that it gazes back into the imaginary era where communities were fixed and stable with the same shared values. While some critics of the communitarian theory will argue that it will fail in the 21st century, as an intellectual trend it retains its popularity. But, hard communitarianism, with its underlying assumption that members in a community share exactly the same values with similar order of priority, is no longer defensible in the contemporary times and on plural large scale communities no longer share similar values. Gyekye (1997) has put forward the notion of moderate communitarianism in which individuality, autonomy and responsibility are respected in traditional African communities. However, individual freedom and autonomy are rare in practice, given the authoritarian structure and the deep respect for tradition in African cultures. *Ukama* in some cases, and here I agree with Theron (1995), “...teaches Africans to evade responsibility, ...(and) to hide behind the collective decision of the tribe” (p. 35). The effect of such a situation is the foundation of a mentality that someone cares for you more than you care for yourself “...the mentality of a chronic hierarchical dependence on the cultural community” (Kochalumchuvattil, 2010, p. 114). While community in the Western sense of the word necessitates some form of commitment to the goals and interests of the group and to the attempt to attain them, such a commitment in the traditional African sense is a

consequence of some form of coercive contract and less of the mutual needs of every member. In this respect, as Buber (2002) argues:

The person has become questionable through being collectivised... the collectivity receives the right to hold the person who is bound to it in such a way that he ceases to have complete responsibility. The collectivity becomes what really exists, the person becomes derivatory... thereby the immeasurable value which constitutes man is imperilled. (p. 80)

Ukama as relationality in the African view can be criticised for imposing strict classification on all persons, thereby consuming their own sense of identity, which is completely defined by the group. Members might not only lose their sense of themselves as individuals but, connectedly, their sense of themselves as members of various other groups they may affiliate with at the same time. On this view, members of a community surrender their freedom. If *ukama* is conceived as the desire for ease and the abdication of responsibility for one's choices by bending over to the crowd then a member in a community of inquiry becomes "...a number instead of a self" (Kierkegaard, 1980, p. 33). One may also accuse the *ukama* ethic of imposing epistemic injustice on members of the social group, especially in hierarchical societies such as those found in traditional Africa as described earlier in this study. The concept of community of inquiry may be criticised as the starting point for the formation of larger groupings such as those associated with culture, race, religions and nationality afflicted by what Splitter has referred to as "the fallacy of singular affiliation"⁵⁵ (ibid). However, the African *ukama* ethic discourages relationships that only give respect to a particular community but instead is inclusive and therefore accommodates all cosmic reality as related-living and non-living, and human and non-human. The notion of relationality in the African context is better understood in the analogue of a magnet. The closer one is

⁵⁵ Splitter goes on to illustrate how, due to the fallacy of singular affiliation, large groups communities degenerate into cultural or ethical relativism that is causing hatred and war in the world today.

to the other, with like magnetic qualities, the greater the bond. Conversely, each individual becomes the focus of communal attention.

Traditional African communities often are charged with neglect of the individuals who constitute the group, yet individuals are the primary ethical concern of *Ukama* in the collective. The *ukama* ethic might be seen to dissolve the individual's ability and right to make free choices, especially in terms of the goals, values and morality. Kennedy and Kennedy (2010) observe that the very notion of community promotes the phenomenon of "groupthink"⁵⁶, that is, "...members' implicit collusion in acting uncritically in order to avoid the risk of conflict and rupture of group cohesiveness" (p. 12). The community of inquiry model appreciates the creation of a safe group environment as a precondition for genuine inquiry, while "groupthink" as a "dark side" of *ukama* ethic represents the negative side of group safety, and is a chief impediment of inquiry. But, if *ukama* is supposed to leave its mark in the community of inquirers, it therefore should demand from all participants what Sharp (1993) referred to as:

...a commitment to freedom, open debate, pluralism, self-government and democracy... to the extent that individuals have had the experience of dialoguing with others as equals, participating in shared, public inquiry that they will be able to eventually take an active role in the shaping of a democratic society (Sharp, 1993, p. 343).

The very concept of a person is only meaningful when individuals are acknowledged only as far as they are associated to other persons. In the context of *ukama*, the identity of a person is relational in as far as he/she locates oneself as *one among others*. It would be indefensible to talk about individuals without reference to groups or collectives to which they belong. To do so is to fall into the trap of what Sen calls the "fallacy of identity disregard", that is, ignoring and neglecting altogether any sense of identification

⁵⁶ "Groupthink" is most commonly associated with faulty group decision-making in a specific task, in the performance of which the group relinquishes and rejects any critical analysis of opinions, any search for grounds for inference-making, and any information that is contrary to the group's preferred course of action (see Kayton, 1999).

with others (Sen, 2006, p. 20) and similarly Kierkegaard's "single individual" (Kierkegaard, 1939, p. 122) existing as a responsible individual human person capable of achieving genuine selfhood. Such is the definition of the notion of individualism, which dismisses the concept of community while epitomising the rational individual as a standalone — away from others. This view prioritises "self-assertiveness, and values such as ambition, success, competence and risk-taking..." (Basabe & Ross, 2005, p. 192). Philosophy for Children is aimed neither at the development of participants to a well-functioning collective nor at the promotion of rampant individualism, but at nurturing individuals who can relate well with others. In effect, *ukama* in a community of inquiry is about egalitarian commitment⁵⁷ with individuals equally engaged in a harmonious interdependence and loyalty to the interests of the group with the hope of collectively transforming the status quo. It is a matter of "it is important for me to maintain harmony with the group", and "I will sacrifice my self-interest for group benefit while I will respect decisions made by the group" (ibid, p. 210). In this sense, *ukama* in a community of others owes allegiance to one's duty and obligation to the group. But, relational interdependence is more than this since it is founded on a mutual understanding of the participating members. To that end, *ukama* checks against individualism by fostering the understanding that each child's concept of self, that is, his/her identity, is relational. Members in the community of inquiry see themselves as among others, thereby:

"...preserving, on the one hand, the intuitive notion that as a person I am of genuine value , as well as the idea that I am a person in the world, whose sense of authenticity must be grounded in (but not strangled or swallowed by) something beyond my own subjectivity, on the other" (Splitter, 2007, p. 268).

The communalistic/humanistic virtue of care may not necessarily be unique to the African ethic of *ukama* but there are many aspects of relating and caring for each other, as expounded in *ukama*:

⁵⁷ Cultures may uphold two different types of collectivism – egalitarian commitment or conservation and hierarchy. The former stresses a voluntary commitment to cooperating with others while the latter will emphasise the maintenance of the status quo. See Schwartz (1994)

- loving, listening and accommodating;
- communicating, understanding and respecting;
- openness, warmth and accessibility;
- supporting, encouraging and responding; and
- kindness, sympathy and concern for the other.

The principles of the community of inquiry identified above, that is relationships through dialogical thinking, being among others, being no greater than the constituents and transparency accords *ukama* a unique status, especially when doing philosophy with children. Thus to the community of inquiry in doing philosophy with children the traditional African ethic of *ukama* contributes immensely the values of relatedness. It is unsurprising that Biko (1978) has described this African treasure chest of humanness by asserting that “...the contribution to the world by Africa will be in the field of human relationship...a great gift... (of) giving the world a more human face” (Biko,1978, p.46).

9.9 Summary

The way a people interpret and understand themselves and their world, that is, their philosophy of life or worldview, guides their thoughts and actions. Likewise, traditional Africans are guided and motivated by the communitarian, holistic and humanistic worldviews. This informs the ways they perceive the person and the community. As such, the community/individual dynamic comes to centre stage. What takes precedence: the community or the individual? The communitarian worldview is indeed a distinct feature of traditional African culture. While I agree that protection of the individual’s interests and pursuits, traditional African human rights conception underscores the need to recognise that the individual is rooted within a community. The African human rights conception, both traditional and contemporary, recognises the importance of the group concurrently with the importance of the individual (Sloth-Nielsen & Mezmur, 2008).

Drawing all this together, I argued that the *ukama* ethic is the fundamental intermediary not only between the individual and the community but also among individuals who constitute the community. But, the challenge that Africa in the present faces is the invasion of Western values of materialism over humanistic values. As discussed above,

however influential foreign values have been, most traditional African values based on their humanistic, communalistic and holistic worldviews have remained unshaken. Placing the human person at the centre of human thought and practice, traditional Africans stress the social values of human relations, community, hospitality, respect for elders and authority, the extended family, and they have a deep sense of religion. Wiredu dismisses some forms of democratic practices in traditional African communities when he asserts that African life is overly authoritarian⁵⁸ in his statement: “The very atmosphere we breathe in many areas of life in our society seems to be suffused with an authoritarian odour” (Wiredu, 1980, p. 3). The collective life and social solidarity place more emphasis on the group than on the individual. In addition, relationship is emphasised and sharing expressed while an emphasis is placed on children appreciating the virtue of sharing from an early age. Hence, I have established that *ukama* recognises the primacy of “us” and “we” in the community of others. While the community of inquiry as practiced in the west in doing philosophy with children is also dependent on compassionate feeling, respect for others, dialogical thinking and mutual cooperation, to mention only a few virtues, the *ukama* ethic within the African perspective of the same will pay special attention to African priorities and existential conditions of 21st century Africa. *Ukama* thus becomes the vital union; the vital link that unites all living and non-living beings horizontally and vertically. Such a relationship realises a worldview that acknowledges the active and passive links between beings and is concerned more with the current that passes through the network than with the individuals themselves.

The community encourages members from childhood to participate in all the activities of community for the good of all as well as for the welfare of the individual. We saw how the participatory contribution of individuals in the material, the social and even mental realms of others gains each member his/her identity in the community. The

⁵⁸ Wiredu’s criticism of authoritarianism in African cultures is based on him placing a high value on the importance of an individual to select and make decisions, and the need to give good reasons for any interference with an individual’s choice. Wiredu argues that there should be unrestricted development of an individual’s will, which can be impeded by authoritarianism that involves manoeuvring by others.

selfish and the idle lose respect. Besides being encouraged to contribute their physical labour for material production all, in their individual capacities, were required to engage in dialogical enterprises for developing and polishing not only their individual wit, but to gainfully engage in deliberative moves for the common good. Shona folk tales are replete with stories of relatedness, even among animals, for example *Sekuru Gudo* (Uncle Baboon) and *Muzukuru Tsuro* (Nephew Hare), to demonstrate to children the place of *ukama* in traditional African communities. The traditional African, as observed above, lives a way of life characterised by empathy, and by the consideration and compassionate feeling for fellow human beings.

The ethic of *ukama* contributes immensely to our understanding of inquiry as it speaks to the value of caring for others. Based on this relational approach *ukama* as caring is an everyday activity and is evidenced by the way parents care for their children and children, in turn, care for their parents, how the community looks after the ill and the aged, and the attention and tolerance provided to the disadvantaged members of the community. In effect, it is in caring thinking that *ukama* contributes quite *uniquely* to the community of inquiry.

Caring thinking among the Shona is about maintaining a healthy relationship with others since it is by sustaining natural relations with others that individual identity is defined. In addition, without the prospect to develop a healthy sense of self, one may not be a knower and thinker capable of furthering knowledge. Education in African family traditions impelled children to self-care and to wonder about their own life conditions and assume the responsibility to improve them. Consequently, caring thinking cements relationships together. I therefore consider the *ukama* ethic both a process and product. On the one hand, it informs a united harmonious life for a community of members and, on the other, *ukama* is a product of the community of members who cooperatively work together to achieve a common goal. Therefore, I assign the ethic of *ukama* among traditional African societies a cornerstone role in the community of inquiry.

The search for meaning *qua* inquiry may not achieve the ends of promoting critical and creative thinkers unless the community of inquirers is grounded in a healthy

environment based on the virtues of compassionate feeling, respect for the other, human dignity, inclusion and openness; all of which explain and are explained in the humanistic, communalistic and holistic worldviews that Africans uphold in the form of Ukama. The community of inquiry as pedagogy in Philosophy for Children seeks to promote in children critical, creative and collaborative thinking but, most significant, it is through caring thinking that the other thinking domains are born and nurtured. Without caring, thinking individuals may not fully attain the virtues of creativity, criticality and collaboration. Ukama embodies the essence of an inquiring community.

However, the humanistic, communalistic orientation of traditional African societies described above cannot escape challenge. It is not uncommon that, irrespective of the emphasis on community and respect, when members feel offended they use physical force including torture and brutality to overcome those who oppose them. In fact, it sounds contradictory for a culture well revered for a humanistic worldview to resort to frequently brutal vengeance. I cite cases of Burundi, Somalia, Rwanda and Zimbabwe where ethnic and political differences have destabilised communities that have cohered together for ages.

In addition, more often than not, if one is to maintain the name *mwana kwaye*, (a good child) one is discouraged from asking challenging questions, questions that are open-ended and test the wisdom of elders. One is said to have lost respect and this distances one from their folk, thereby undermining the value of *ukama*. This forces the young, especially children to take a passive and submissive role. Even the African Children's Charter is quite vocal about the duty to respect one's parents, the extended family members and elders at all times. This appears like condemning children to unquestioning obedience in the face of despotic and authoritarian family and community structures. To that end, children lose the value of critical analysis from an early age. Limits are set for them as to what to say, when to say it, how it is said and where. This may not necessarily be unique to Africa but, in essence, traditional societies such as African ones tend to oppress individual potential under the guise of the good of the community. However, the above critique can be countered if one considers the African's social existence in terms of the structural foundation, and the scope of the real

ontological presuppositions. It is in the criss-crossing of relationships (*ukama*) in which the individual is located that he or she discovers personal security and hope. Hence, individuals in the end develop a submissive attitude as demanded by the existential circumstances of communality and mutual harmony. Given such shortcomings I propose that the basic tenets of the Lipmanian model of community of inquiry can enhance the virtues of the *ukama* ethic discussed above. Thus, *ukama* in the context of Africa and the Lipmanian view of the community of inquiry are complementary equals in the enterprise of doing philosophy with children in Africa.

This discussion has explored the centrality of *ukama* in the sense of community in general and in the context of its place in a community of philosophical inquiry in particular. It is reasonable to take a more critical examination of this individual orientation, especially in the sphere of a communocratic worldview, to produce insights for people questing for industrial development, in this case the Africans. While the community must allow individuals to do what they can by their own power, the community must assist these individuals where they are not able to accomplish a necessary goal or a useful task. In this case, individuals are protected against excessive domination, thereby preventing them from being swallowed up under the guise of community and *ukama* as relationship. In sum, I find Van der Walt's characterisation of the man in community compatible with the dispositions I would recommend for the *ukama* ethic in a community of inquiry. These include:

- a high regard for the group elevating it above the individual;
- inclusive attitude;
- intense personal relationships;
- priority on good human relations;
- cooperation;
- duty towards community;
- social harmony;
- dialogue;
- modesty, compliance and pliability; and
- willingness to compromise (van der Walt, 1997).

The community/individual dichotomy portrayed in the literature is excessively simplistic, given the contemporary global era with increased immigration trends. It is difficult to strictly classify communities as individualistic or communalistic. Similarly, it is naive in the 21st-century Africa to describe a society as valuing *either* relatedness *or* autonomy. I would classify the present situation in most of Africa as one guided by moderate communitarianism. Individuals should make themselves available and take up assistance that will make them independent with the collective will for the communal good. Such is the philosophy behind what Gyekye (1997) calls moderate communitarianism. In the context of the *ukama* ethic, the issue is not that Africans experience the *self* only with respect to the deindividuated community, but rather that community construction of the *self* demands a sense of innate, inevitable relationship to larger fields of the relational force. A moderate communitarian philosophy, which is symptomatic of the African worldview, will provide plausible insights into the theory and practice of the community of inquiry in Philosophy for Children in Africa and it is the Ukama ethic of it that forms the root and the buttress.

In the final analysis, I have attempted to show that the African view of *ukama* in the community of inquiry resonates and sits well with the Western modes of Philosophy for Children if the programme is introduced in Africa in the 21st century. Some practical illustrations and implications for the Philosophy for Children classroom in Africa in the present era have been provided. My overarching objective has been to demonstrate that the African perspective of Philosophy for Children is a hybrid; an amalgam of the traditional African, Western and Eastern historical and cultural traits. Essentially, I have established that such a perspective of Philosophy for Children is the hermeneutics of hybrid African culture consisting in the traditional African conceptions of doing philosophy with children and the Western/Lipmanian model of it. I have contended that if Africa is to make a significant contribution to Philosophy for Children, not only in the African milieu but also to the general understanding and the actual practice, it is via the *ukama* ethic. My proposal supports the call by the then Organization of African Unity (OAU) and UNESCO for African educational authorities to “revise and reform the content of education in the areas of the curriculum, textbooks, and methods, so as to take account of the African environment, child development, cultural heritage, and the

demands of technological progress and economic development, especially industrialisation” (UNESCO, 1961, p. 23). If philosophy of education (and by implication an African Philosophy for Children) is to be authentic, “...its distinctive concerns must arise out of issues thrown up by firsthand experience of life itself ” in African societies (Mason, 1985, p. 105). Without roots in African experiences and livelihoods, philosophy of education would be reduced to “intellectual gymnastics” (ibid). The traditional African background also provides rich stimuli for Philosophy for Children in schools in Africa, especially with the folklore, the proverbs, riddles, poems and songs, while the Lipmanian model contributes the rationality, systemacity, coherence, argumentation and critical analysis as Western philosophical tradition demands. The former will knit well with the Lipmanian method: that is, the community of philosophical inquiry to produce a hybridised Philosophy for Children project suitable for a 21st-century child in Africa. The illustrations I have provided in this chapter have deliberately left out the implications of my proposal to doing philosophy with children in metropolitan set-ups⁵⁹. This deliberate exclusion is justified by the assumption that a Philosophy for Children proposal for the urbanised, metropolitan Africa would almost replicate the different models that have been tried and tested in Europe, the Americas and Australasia. Since the literature is replete with the proposals

⁵⁹ I acknowledge that the modern/ postmodern Africa of the 21st century consists of the traditional and the modern person as described earlier in Chapter 3. However, I submit that the presence of traditional Africa and hence the traditional child cannot be ruled out completely. The child in most of rural Africa today, though under the influence of western schooling, is still grounded quite firmly in his/ her cultural roots. If this view is accepted then there are good reasons for postulating an African perspective founded in the conditions of the same child. It has been argued that philosophy begins in a wonder, and is hermeneutical since concepts which form the basis of philosophical inquiry emanate from a people’s culture, then it is defensible to situate a Philosophy for Children programme within a given geographical area in which the school is located and give it a name derived from the location in which it is located. African culture(s) provide(s) settings for educating children. Given the characterisation of the modern child, resident in the metropolitan areas and without any links with the rural background and whose values are almost completely western, I see little importance of providing a Philosophy for Children proposal that includes stimuli such as the ones described in this chapter. A different set of stimuli would be provided for such geographical area. However, given the westernisation of the latter, the format would just be as western as those already tried and tested in Europe, America and Australasia. I am only isolating the rural child for the purpose of giving my study a sharper focus and am giving attention to doing philosophy in schools in a rural setting and labelling it an African perspective of Philosophy for Children; all the while taking due care of not essentialising and overglorifying traditional Africa.

for doing Philosophy for Children, especially in westernised localities and regions, I turned to the rural schools and set-ups for illustrations. But then the question that remains unattended concerns the uniqueness of an African perspective of doing philosophy with children, given that the values of the Ukama ethic and those on which the principles of community of inquiry interlock? In this regard, Kai Horsthemke and Penny Enslin (2009) inquire whether it is defensible to have a “‘typically African’ philosophy of education”.

I acknowledge that the values could be universal. But I also assert that we can also particularise them by locating them in specific existential conditions. I go by Janz’s (2004) proposition that a philosophy can take place in “a place” and support the view of prefixing doing philosophy with children ‘an African Philosophy for Children’. My case is that a unique African perspective is possible if we consider that children practising philosophy in Africa have to come to terms with African priorities and realities. It would be pretentious and dishonest to think the realities and concerns of Africa and those of America and Europe are the same, although these areas have disparate historical and socio-political circumstances. To this end, a philosophy that can be said to be African “...has different priorities to philosophy of education elsewhere” (Horsthemke & Enslin, 2009b, p. 218). As alluded to earlier on, the activities of philosophising and education begins in the social milieu and the experiences of the people therein. African children will experience the world differently from learners in other places outside the continent and hence they will have different philosophical priorities. To impose an alien form of philosophy is tantamount to hermeneutical epistemic injustice characterised by the western questioning of African knowledge and experiences and hegemonic tendencies that had negative effects on the African child. Hence, an African perspective of philosophy for Children is one way of “addressing the effects of colonialism and apartheid on (South) African education” (Horsthemke & Enslin, 2009b). The African content is ravaged by the scourge of HIV/AIDS which has not only affected children’s lives at home but also in schools as institutions. Rampant, corruption, dictatorial governance are common vices that affect learners’ and adults’ lives

daily. Such challenges, among other can become stimulus for doing philosophy with children in Africa. Hence, I sum up my case for a uniquely African perspective of doing philosophy with children by using Horsthemke's conclusion that

“it appears to be plausible that the particular historical, geographic and sociocultural experiences of Africans give rise to particular priorities that shape African theory and practice- and also yield conceptual tools that are likely to reach philosophy of education (*and hence Philosophy for Children*) elsewhere : the idea of mental decolonization, the modeling of humanity, and reconciliation/forgiveness” (Horsthemke, 2010, pp. 54-55).

Chapter 10: Some Concluding Remarks and Recommendations

10.1 Summary

The end of an inquiry such as this one is marked by the question: What results can one show? An immediate response to this question is found in the core task that one set for oneself at the beginning of the study, that is, to argue a case for an African perspective of Philosophy for Children. A further analysis of the aim would include, among other issues, the question of possibility of a uniquely African perspective of Philosophy for Children, its justification and the method of doing so. For those confronting the notion of “Philosophy for Children” for the first time, the following questions quickly come to their minds: “Philosophy for children? Doing philosophy with children? Teaching children philosophy”? Without splitting hairs, I have used the notion to explain the activity of doing philosophy with children in schools and not the activity of teaching philosophy to children. To do this, I explored first the concept “*philosophy*”. My examination has emphasised the long-time assertion that the notion is elusive, contestable, and therefore all scholars and thinkers have consented that the concept has not yielded any consensual definition. This confirms the general view that the question of philosophy is itself a philosophical question. Attempts have been made to characterise philosophy from a commonsense understanding to a more exclusive view. Philosophy is a worldview in one sense, while another view looks at philosophy as a process, an activity and a method. This separates philosophy as a product from philosophy as an activity. Another paradigm that emanated from these distinctions has been the consideration of philosophy as a universal practice coupled with universal methods of inquiry, as opposed to philosophy as an activity that has cultural roots and therefore methods of inquiry that are particular to the cultural context. This study has argued for Philosophy for Children as an activity of philosophising with children in school until they reach the age of eighteen.

The above background has paved the way for a closer exploration of the African case by entering the contested “African Philosophy” terrain. The competing forces for a definition of African philosophy are delineated by the binary between the culturalist/particularist school and the universalist/ professional school. The former defines philosophy in Africa as beginning with documenting the worldviews of ethnic Africans or philosophically engaging African problems and concerns, while the latter prefers to define the same by ascribing to philosophy some irreducible and basic characteristics and features. Hence, the latter holds that regardless of where it is practised, philosophy must possess the features engrained in these characteristics. An understanding of the concept of philosophy along these two broad dimensions gives impetus to our understanding of an African philosophy of education. From the two schools, Henry Odera Oruka’s trends or perspectives were explored to provide a defence for the definition of an African philosophy. Ethnophilosophy prefers to employ the collective worldviews, proverbs, folklore etc traditional to Africa to define philosophy. This definition is a general view of philosophy in that it is mere recitation and valorisation of a fixed set of doctrines to be uncritically transmitted. This, from the perspective of Philosophy of Children, is indefensible, just as the criticism offered in the use of fixed knowledge stored in books and minds of teachers.

Philosophic sagacity is premised on the understanding that in traditional Africa, there are men and women who are reputed for their wisdom; who are capable of critical independent thinking and whose thoughts and actions are guided by the power of reason rather than by the authority of communal consensus. An African perspective of Philosophy for Children may take a cue from this trend in as far as philosophic sagacity emphasises the use of reason, individual judgement and critical thinking especially of existential circumstances of the cultural life of a people. However, I hasten to acknowledge that Philosophy for Children is inclusive of all children, from the less gifted to the most gifted, whereas sage philosophy is essentially exclusive; it is a preserve for a select few gifted individuals. The third trend, nationalist-ideological philosophy, seeks to return to the traditional African values of socialism and familyhood in order to be liberated from the chains of oppressive elements and cultural imperialism. The trend is a product of politicians in Africa aimed at addressing the question of

nationalism. It contributes little to our understanding of an African perspective of Philosophy for Children, since it is dependent on a nostalgic past just as, to a large extent, ethnophilosophy is. However, it reminds us of the African humanistic trait necessary in a life of community — one which is essential for the practice of a philosophical community. Professional philosophy defines philosophy as universal, characterised by certain rules that guide it as a discipline. Philosophy, in this sense, is a discipline that inquires into the universal concepts and problems through rational, systematic, reflective and rigorous means. This trend is defensible as it provides a definition which will consider Philosophy for Children as an activity, guided by a set of rules of inquiry, engaged into by individuals in communion with others. If we ask “do we have an African perspective of Philosophy for Children?” professional philosophers would presumably say “no” because the necessary conditions for philosophy, an African philosophy and consequently an African Philosophy for Children, have not yet been met. While the culturalist perspective would pass the traditional African worldviews as philosophy suitable for Africa, the same would not go through the universalist mill. However, I have argued for a hybridised Philosophy for Children project for Africa in which African cultures provide the stimulus for professional philosophy to interpret through rational means. Hence, in view of this, professional philosophy becomes a hermeneutics of the African cultural background. Philosophy for Children would not only engage ethnophilosophy as mere recitation of beliefs, thoughts and practices in Africa’s past but would involve the professional philosopher’s tools to test whether the same philosophy is rational and is based on reflection and reason; is critical; and is systematic and organised into a coherent whole.

While the above would provide the stimulus, the content and the method of doing philosophy with children in Africa, my argument was not going to be firmed on a solid foundation without examining the notion of the candidate with whom to philosophise, that is the child. An understanding of the concept “*child*” in the context of Africa was necessary to define the parameters within which an African perspective of philosophy is to take place. The *child* in Africa in the traditional African milieu is a *not yet*, a *becoming* being dependent in all spheres of life on the adult members. Despite traditional emphasis the values of independence and the development of reasoning,

children in the traditional African experience are docile members of the community who are not allowed to challenge the status quo. This is stressed by the type of education that they receive, which emphasises the development of a culturally determined character, and this is informed by the communalistic, humanistic and holistic worldviews esteemed in traditional communities. My discussion does not leave out the transitional child who oscillates between traditional village life guided by an ethos described above and the urban life. The third type of *child* is the cosmopolitan child who exhibits the influence of multiple cultures and has little to do with the traditional African culture. Given the three senses, it is problematic to define an African *child*. Since there are different cultures in Africa, it is also misplaced to speak of a homogeneous African culture. Instead, it is proper to speak of African cultures. In addition, each culture has a unique concept of “child”, though there are commonalities that connect the cultures in Africa. Hence, it would be inaccurate to use the all-encompassing term “*African child*” but instead “*child in Africa*”. It is also inappropriate to speak of notion Philosophy for Children in the traditional African context unless we look elsewhere around the globe at some cases where the practice has been more formalised.

Philosophy has become a reputable feature in schools, especially in the Americas, Europe, Asia and Australasia. The process of human civilisation has been accompanied by the development of reasoning and the slow but rigorous activity of learning how to improve reasoning. This was necessitated by the 6th-century Greek civilization, which saw thinking turning in on itself and people started to think about thinking, hence philosophy was born. I traced the development of doing philosophy in the Western tradition from Socrates to Dewey and through to Russell. The exploration revealed that this history of ideas has made it possible for Matthew Lipman’s initiation of Philosophy for Children. There are different views held by different philosophers with regard to the relationships between “child”, “childhood” and “philosophy”, which constitute the bedrock on which Philosophy for Children was founded. What children are, what they know, and their place in society, is dependent on the epistemological, metaphysical and moral status that children are accorded by their envioning communities. While some scholars have concluded that children are beings in themselves, others view them as merely *potential* beings. Some have conceived of children as rational beings in

themselves while others have proposed they are animals of instinct. Further distinctions revealed that children possess what adults lack, yet their opposites hold the view that children lack perceptions and conceptions of the adult world. The question of adult protection features prominently as we try to understand the concept “child”. Scholars surveyed have shown how in the history of philosophical ideas in the West, children are perceived as individuals with a capacity to be rational and to have the potential for independence and autonomy, which can be developed.

Lipman’s marriage of philosophy to children and children to philosophy demonstrates how schooling can contribute to the cultivation of critical and creative thinking in children to develop a reasonable citizenry. His criticism of the standard paradigm of education has prepared the avenue for his Philosophy for Children, focusing on doing philosophy with children in schools (as opposed to teaching them philosophy). In this sense, Philosophy for Children creates opportunities for children to think critically, creatively, caringly and collaboratively, thereby making it a thinking skills programme designed especially for children. Associated with this is the pedagogical question. Lipman and his associates have suggested and applied the Peircean notion of the community of inquiry as the appropriate approach to doing Philosophy with Children. This summary gives a background that leaves the following questions unaddressed: Are there some historical antecedents of doing philosophy with children in Africa? After all, what (if anything) is wrong with the full-scale importation of Lipman’s method to Africa? How do we justify a shift from a successful, conventional method already in place, which has been tried and tested elsewhere?

I have argued that philosophy cannot ignore the study of traditional belief systems of the people and that philosophical problems originate in the existential condition of a culture. If philosophical inquiry can be said to be taking place within a given geographical area, using the questions and methods appropriate to that world, I find no reason to deny attaching the process of the inquiry and the products thereof to the area. If children in Africa draw on their African backgrounds, including the world of African narratives, as the stimulus for rational, critical and systematic thinking, then there is every reason to label that activity an African Philosophy for Children. If from the

universalist point of view, the word philosophy implies a systematic, critical and reflective practice which appeals to reason, then the universalists may also accept that the activities done with children in the context of Africa using the methods described above to inquire into the philosophical raw materials available in the African cultural background amount to doing philosophy.

The hermeneutical-narrative approach to Philosophy for Children that I proposed offers a panacea in the contest between ethnophilosophy and professional philosophy as perspectives of doing philosophy with children in Africa. I challenge both the ethnophilosophical view and the professional view by occupying the middle position and opting for the hermeneutical approach. Merely collecting myths, proverbs and worldviews is not only nostalgic of a past that is no longer there but also does little to excite children into becoming critical and creative thinkers. This serves to explain why I have proposed nurturing critical interrogation of these traditional artefacts. Equally, from the professional school, the methods of rationality alone do not justify the transplantation of foreign tools and materials into the African setting. I identified hybridity of the two schools as not only a relevant but also a justifiable proposition of doing philosophy in the context of Africa. If we agree that all that a philosophical discourse should primarily do is to inquire into the problems and questions that the questioning environment provides, then context is relevant to philosophy. An African perspective of Philosophy for Children should therefore concern itself with African issues and affairs in an attempt to provide answers to African existential circumstances in which children find themselves. Therefore, the content and the methods of doing philosophy with children should start from the African experience before taking a global outlook. If, in this sense, philosophy is the activity of analysing and critically examining the raw materials in the form of beliefs, customs and values, that is, processing materials provided by culture, then it is defensible to situate Philosophy for Children against an African background. Through this self-reflective method philosophy becomes practical and is therefore precluded from becoming purposeless and unproductive abstraction.

Traditional social institutions, for example, the family and local communities that form African life are pregnant with meaning and what children doing philosophy in Africa need is a reflective explication of the African categories more than imported materials that in some cases are outdated even in America where they originated, and in other cases have failed elsewhere. Yes, some critics dismiss the use of traditional Lipmanian materials as stimulus for philosophical inquiry with children in Africa. But, a counterargument would justify their employment since philosophy is not necessarily limited to a place and time. My position is that total reflection is impossible to finite beings. Even the stories, fables and proverbs used in traditional Africa became a body of fossilised *doctrines* after some reflection in earlier times. I agree that for the present times they are non-philosophy. However, given their situatedness in the African milieu, they are materials which children, in a school setting, may reflect on, criticise, argue and reason about to come up with new meanings in contemporary times. Therefore, an African perspective of Philosophy for Children is philosophising the non-philosophy or at least the not-so-obviously-philosophical of African culture. Its original impulse and its nourishment is the African source beginning in African culture. Culture becomes the source of, and object for, creative and critical thinking. Reliance on foreign and borrowed principles cannot suffice for one to claim ownership of one's self or one's reality. However, this does not mean that Philosophy for Children in Africa should only and unreflectively make use of African myths and beliefs as philosophy. Once children start to accept or reject these myths and beliefs within the framework of philosophical questioning, reflecting on them, and asking questions about them and attempting to answer those questions, they are doing philosophy within the context of the African experience. It would be folly if a Philosophy for Children classroom were to become an ethnic museum that enviously guards the sanctity of the African ancestral heritage with an interest to protect it from other forms of encroachment, such as the importation of foreign tools of doing philosophy.

We must accept that the Africa we are living in is a global world with multiple cultures mixing and mingling with one another. In effect, this implicates Africa in metamorphoses due to cultural and material changes. This also means that the cultures that the 21st-century African lives and experiences are no longer the traditional cultures,

but rather hybrid cultures, including the cultures of the former colonisers. If we are to refer to philosophising the African culture, the process should be inclusive of “alien” cultures. To this end, an African perspective of Philosophy for Children interrogates the contemporary cultures of African societies, including those that “invaded” their traditions. Mention was made above on the criticism of borrowing foreign forms for doing philosophy. It was noted in the discussion that adopting Lipman’s materials for Africa is tantamount to bringing back the dominance of alien categories to Africa years after independence. Nonetheless, we can work out a philosophy that is African as a protest against an externally imposed one. This kind of protest in the context of Philosophy for Children in Africa is overstated. It is based on the misconception of what the African perspective is asking for. I am only proposing that the traditional narratives be exposed to rational criticism so that a true African Philosophy for Children is freed from mere (and ultimately unrewarding) nostalgia and an overglorified traditional African background. After all, if we are to be fair with ourselves, the use of foreign intellectual instruments is not, of necessity, harmful. They act as test agents against whom we can evaluate our philosophies and practices. Cultural borrowing is even inescapable since philosophies are necessarily expressions of particular cultures and also show family resemblances which permit philosophical discussions of issues borrowed from other cultures. The African perspective of Philosophy for Children as hermeneutics should use materials that are rooted in the African historicity, taking into consideration that culture is dynamic. Despite the value of the African past to contemporary times, the interpretation of our cultures should be forward-looking.

The African situation of interpretation of culture is unique in that Western doctrines assumed superiority over African cultures and therefore left the present-day Africa in a precarious position. The 21st-century African is dependent on circumstances largely beyond his/her control. Remnants of colonialism and cultural imperialism have left many Africans uncertain, unstable and insecure, hence they experience a precarious livelihood and dependent on the will, pleasure and cultures of the former colonisers. Discourses on philosophy in Africa should focus head-on on the downfall of the former colonisers’ hegemony through a critical effort to reconsider the African situation that transcends Western concepts and categories. So a proposal for Philosophy for Children

said to be African is deconstructive in that it challenges the alleged universalism of the Western particular to recentre the lost cultures by bringing in the “*other*” that has been ignored. African Philosophy for Children is a critical hermeneutics of the African condition, especially if it takes due cognisance of liberating the continent from the continued humiliation and destructive consequences of colonialism. In addition, hermeneutics as interpretation of African culture will contribute to the rediscovery and re-evaluation of the so-called “true, unadulterated African past”. The African perspective of Philosophy for Children has an important task of deconstructing the African past while simultaneously critically exposing the Western-imposed categories. It takes account of an African mindset; or a mindset shift from the European to an African paradigm. But, the process of deconstruction is continuous. Thus, we can conclude that Philosophy for Children in Africa is in the making. There is therefore no need for such a philosophy to struggle to be either an image of *another*, to be *completely other* or to measure up to the Western paradigm to gain appropriateness. Hybridisation of Philosophy for Children will allow children to learn to *live* their demonstrably valuable Africanness and also learn from what the West has offered, in the theory and practice of Lipman’s proposal.

The practice should start from an early age with children engaging in the rigorous and critical exploration of the African situation; sifting through our legacies while simultaneously critically exposing the relevant and casting off the sluggish and, in the final analysis, marrying the African heritage with the modern conceptions. The African perspective should therefore encompass the incorporation, adaptation, integration of other cultures into and through African dreams and understanding in to grant vitality, development and change. Such a perspective is necessary for continued existence and accomplishment of peoples of African origin worldwide. It is a matter of “what any other races in the world possess, we as Africans also possess; otherwise we are less human”, which demands criticising the derogatory characterisation of the African cultural realities by former colonisers as intellectually inferior. By using culture as the starting point for doing philosophy with children, Philosophy for Children should not merely be asking for the recognition of an African identity by the West, since culture is dynamic and therefore is not a finished product. Rather, it is one of the tools with which

the “assaulted” picture of Africa can be cleansed. The proposed Philosophy for Children is not clothing the Lipmanian philosophic model with African robes by domesticating the philosophies of other lands but rather a paradigm that is rooted in Africanness and that has been inspired by Lipman’s model. In this sense, Philosophy for Children in Africa will attempt to redeem and reposition African cultures. However, we should guard against overglorifying African cultures qua worldviews in our definition of philosophy. Only in the culturalist view is worldview a philosophy since in this sense worldview does not state and appraise arguments but is rather a veneration of culture(s). Hence the need to separate worldviews from philosophy as a critical practice. There is no need to reject philosophies from other peoples. Rather a contemporary Philosophy for Children in Africa should allow children to be acquainted with alternative ways of doing philosophy from around the globe; comparing, contrasting and critiquing them to effectively use whatever is worthwhile in them. Therefore, it is misplaced thinking to look at an African perspective of Philosophy for Children that I have argued for as an antithesis of Lipman’s model. In addition, children in Africa should be exposed to philosophy from an early age to break with the traditional uncritical habits of thought and pass from the earlier stage of traditional thinking, thereby challenging the conviction that “this is what our ancestors said”, as will be shown in the section on recommendations below. What then is the promise of an African perspective of Philosophy for Children?

Education curricula in Africa rarely take into specific account its inherent subject-matter – the theories and concepts with which the beneficiaries of education see their cultural world and their ways of thinking and engaging with the world. Not only has the age of outsiders determining and “delivering” what Africans need not produced the intended outcomes but Africa’s leadership and education stakeholders are also lacking a concerted continental effort, besides long-winded rhetoric to reposition education curricula by premising curricular content on the African environment, child development, cultural heritage, and the demands of technological advances and economic development. African cultures, traditional and contemporary, should provide the content on which reflective methods can be applied to produce an authentic African Philosophy for Children; I have also shown how *ukama* can contribute immensely to the

model of doing philosophy with children. The notion of community in a philosophical community of inquiry has a lot to learn from *ukama* as relationality, which forms the bedrock of traditional African communities. The notion of *ukama* is promising within the context of the conversion of classrooms into communities of inquiry. *Ukama* brings to such communities the values of *listening* to each other with *respect*, *assisting* each other in drawing inferences from the topic under discussion, *supporting* each other's ideas and identifying with one another. *Ukama* is central for any community of inquirers. Without relationships, the essence of community would rather turn to serving selfish interests. While culture, in the hermeneutical sense described above, provides the stimulus, the raw material for philosophising and the Lipmanian model would provide the philosophical/reflective tools. *Ukama* offers to the community of philosophical inquiry the relational dimension. The Western model would benefit from appropriating the Ukama ethic from the African ways of life. The primacy of respect for *humanity* and a life of *community of others* and *being with others* is what will make an African dimension of Philosophy for Children unique with its emphasis on living together in peace and in trust, and its embrace of tolerance and compassion — attributes that are at the heart of the philosophical community of inquiry. My case is that the Ukama ethic is itself founded in the communalistic nature of traditional Africa in order to advance the community needs and priorities.

If doing philosophy, as explored in this study, is a matter of creatively interpreting one's culture, then the African Philosophy for Children that we quest for is at a crossroads with three routes open to it. One of them would be to go back to the African doctrines and oral narratives and teach children to *learn about* these traditions by calling them African philosophical heritage. The second road leads to the western tradition of philosophy coupled with its revered tradition from thinkers of repute: Socrates, Plato, Sartre and Kant, to mention, a few. In this case, children in Africa will docilely learn from them and comment on them and call it Philosophy for Children in Africa. This is tantamount to surrendering one's own historic initiative. The third would take into consideration the hybrid approach.

What I propose in doing philosophy with children is a hybrid philosophy programme that amalgamates the African heritage, including the contemporary culture, and the Western tradition of philosophy as represented in Lipman's emphasis on philosophy as critical, self-correcting thinking coupled with rational, rigorous and systematic reflection of reality. Remitting and discussing the African experiences and predicaments makes an African perspective of Philosophy for Children relevant and therefore pragmatic. In its reconstructive stance, such a programme will be designed in such a way that the traditional thoughts and the modern criteria of rationality are fused to capture the import of the 21st-century African priorities. By introducing philosophical moves to children from an early age, Philosophy for Children in Africa is likely to contribute substantially to the development of reasonable citizens on the continent.

The African predicament exhibited through retarded economic growth and sluggish social development may reap benefits of developing an informed citizenry, if schools in Africa incorporate Philosophy for Children in the curriculum. The emphasis of such a programme on children's ability to make informed choices and to select the most effective means to ends develops the dispositions of being reasonable, especially if initiated at an early age. Such persons will strive for objectivity and develop an attitude of tolerance by accepting alternative viewpoints without a rushed judgment. If children learn and accept that they are fallible; accepting that we all at one point or another can err, they will grow into understanding that there is always a need to leave spaces for new knowledge and will be prepared to accept difference. Africa is desperate for citizens who hold such attitudes, especially when the continent is suffering from the ravages of civil war, crime, corruption and the after-effects of long-term dictatorships. Philosophy for Children will prepare children for reasonable citizenship with a capacity to make judicious decisions. Through the practice of rigorous reflection, children growing up in philosophy will learn to accept differences; respecting what is relevant and openly denouncing what does not carry weight. The development of Africa can be augmented if the habits of rational thought penetrate children's activities at an early age. This is the goal of introducing children to philosophy. If Philosophy for Children is to be productive to its users, then children in Africa must be able to identify and explore the African predicament in the 21st century. Being able to identify the challenges that

confront one's situation is one disposition that those exposed to doing philosophy should be able to display. Simply projecting what the culture has in store for you will not help your dilemma. Rather, Africans should be exposed to knowledge of the problems that beset their cultures and be enabled to show how such cultures attempt solutions to those challenges. Hence, Philosophy for Children in this sense is useful, that is, it contributes to self-knowledge in Africa. The African perspective of Philosophy for Children that I quested for in this study becomes a call for rational enunciations of African viewpoints, which stand for the African perspective in the general discourse of all human beings. On the other hand, it is a budding academic discipline that has the potential of creating internal solutions to the African predicament.

10.2 Recommendations

An influential movement towards doing philosophy with children is presently on the rise within the global philosophical community. Bearing in mind that Philosophy for Children as a critical thinking skill programme in schools has had expansive implementation elsewhere, especially in the North, Australasia, South America and many parts of the Far East, but with very insignificant trials in Africa, especially in South Africa, I have made a theoretical exposé of an African perspective of Philosophy for Children. Diverse proposals have been undertaken in the last few years, varying from official support for innovation, to the establishment of philosophy in primary school, in addition to the development of pilot programmes. But, two models are apparent. One is the Lipmanian model developed in the United States, as already discussed, which presents philosophy basically as a series of exercises on problems to be solved. The model has appeared to be the more popular and adopted in many countries the world over. The other, the European model, typifies the traditional teaching of philosophy and is similar to philosophy as taught in universities. I make suggestions in the paragraphs below that demonstrate how Africa can also have an African-centred Philosophy for Children in the 21st century. The Philosophy for Children in Africa debate will concern itself with how to move from and break with the numerous traditions and the habituated methods and culture in schools. Doing philosophy with children, that is, teaching children how to philosophise in schools is

new in the history of education in Africa though the idea may not be. That children in Africa can do philosophy from an early age is not in doubt but the questions that remain unattended are:

1. From what age should philosophy be done with children in schools in Africa?
2. Do schools in Africa have appropriately qualified staff (teachers) to conduct philosophy classes from preschool to high school?
3. Can the economies in Africa sustain the demands of such a mega transformative programme in education? and
4. What possible solutions are at Africa's disposal to address the above?

On the question of age, I suggest and recommend that, with adequate training of facilitators of the philosophical inquiry process, children as early as preschool, by virtue of their inquisitiveness and their appetite for knowledge, can be exposed to philosophical issues. This guiding framework is founded on the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF)'s definition of the child as a young person under the age of eighteen. My proposal for a philosophy for children project in Africa is intended for children from pre-primary until secondary-school age. Most preschoolers are intensely curious and interested in learning and at this age they insistently ask the question, WHY? They are inquisitive and show great wonder about the world, but, by the time they reach third or fourth grade, they come to school apathetic and often disinterested in learning. It is with this innate interest to generate questions and build up inquiry that a philosophical community of inquiry begins. Philosophy for Children will draw on children's sense of wonder to enable them to devise and communicate their own viewpoint.

Associated with this is the question of language: Which language is most suitable for doing philosophy with children, especially at an early age, for example, in the preschool? I would recommend that it is in the language the learners use in their daily experiences. If we agree that people (children included) form concepts from their environments and concepts are abstractions in the form of words drawn from factual information and experiences, then philosophy can be best done in the vernacular language of the learners from preschool. Hence, I recommend that for the philosophy

materials to be accessible to all learners, a great deal of work is involved in providing teaching tools and instruments, including books written in the indigenous language of the learners, to accommodate the public they are addressing. This also includes designing those materials in the form of the learner's challenges in everyday life to necessitate philosophical reflection.

The second issue is a logistical matter: Given the crowded school curriculum and an examination-oriented school programme, how do we fit in yet another subject? In other words: How could Philosophy for Children be built into the school curricula? Some proposals have recommended that doing philosophy with children be included as part of the subjects already on the timetable with philosophical moves applied in the teaching of history, mathematics and geography, for example. Proponents of this interdisciplinary approach to philosophy for children propose that including philosophy within the disciplines permits communication between several subject matters and helps learners to adopt a wider view of human knowledge while, at the same time, "avoiding excessive systematic thinking". While I agree with this school of thought, what I would recommend for schools in Africa is that philosophical questioning and thinking may only be embedded within other disciplines as a first step towards a separate, full-fledged Philosophy for Children programme on the timetable. I ultimately defend a school curriculum that will accord a full, complete and autonomous position of Philosophy for Children on the curriculum, especially in high schools.

Could the aims of doing philosophy with children be the same in all the countries, given the cultural diversity of Africa? Are there not problems linked to cultural differences — not only among different countries, but within them? I recommend that it is important to acknowledge the context of the models adopted. Special cultural adaptation is required for each model. I propose that, and in line with the Lipmanian suggestion, no one Philosophy for Children session is identical to the other. Hence, there is need to situate the practice in the context of a number of variables, among others, the culture of the children. A unique example is use of different stimuli for philosophical inquiry between rural and urban learners within one country. While Philosophy for Children in schools as an innovation is Western in origin, it leaves an open space for extension,

reproduction or adaptation to new contexts; hence, I recommend the theory of hybridisation as a promising orientation.

In addition, to strictly advocate a separate Philosophy for Children, especially in high school, might discourage some countries in Africa, especially the poor nations. The fear of sustaining such a project, given the human and financial resources at their disposal vis-a-vis, the demands of setting up a reasonable Philosophy for Children infrastructure, from furniture and classroom space, might dissuade the minds of policy makers and curriculum planners. I therefore recommend that through seeking funding from global institutions such as UNESCO and UNICEF, the poorer African states start Philosophy for Children classes with experiments in form of trial lessons within the education system ahead of publicising their use and communicating their success results. It might be in the form of introducing philosophy as an option in certain schools in certain regions or as a constituent part of school curricula under the tutelage of trained Philosophy for Children instructors. Such experiments would demand the respect of protocol, close monitoring and critical evaluation with an eye to expand. I recommend that due to lack of resources, it is possible for education systems in Africa hoping to introduce Philosophy for Children to initiate simple critical thinking exercises, as shown in Chapter 9, founded in the folklore and other stimuli, to allow children to express their own interpretations of their experiences. In addition, by institutionalising such mega reforms in education, it would be regrettable to find that children are only introduced to participation in philosophical communities of inquiry (at primary school), only to lapse at high school and be reintroduced to philosophy at university or college. Hence, I contend that there is need to provide philosophy classes at all levels of the children's career to firm up their questioning and developing thoughtful and rational arguments.

One of the challenges that has threatened recent innovations in doing philosophy with children is the absence of skilled Philosophy for Children teachers, and there has not been established a teacher training course specially designed to equip teachers-in-the-making with the ability to handle philosophy classes. If Philosophy for Children is to take effect in Africa, then the starting point is to train teachers first how to philosophise

before equipping them with the dispositions of handling a philosophical community of inquiry with children. Facilitating or leading a philosophical community of inquiry will demand an ability to manage a discussion. It is a question of method and a question of content-coping with the philosophical direction of the deliberations. Such competences must be acquired and nurtured in teacher education courses and in teacher continuing professional development programmes. I therefore recommend that there be close coordination between ministries and departments of education in the introduction of Philosophy for Children in Africa, especially in countries that have separate higher education and primary and secondary Education departments. I suggest that Philosophy for Children training be done in initial teacher education, while teacher development courses may be provided through in-service training. But, a successful teacher education programme is founded on a sound, well-structured plan to train teacher educators. Hence for Africa, I would recommend that nation-states either fund and send potential teacher trainers to those countries that are well-resourced in Philosophy for Children to receive training or hire expatriate skilled practitioners to train the locals. However, the danger of importing and transplanting the methods from one country to another must be guarded against, as alluded to earlier on.

As demonstrated in the study, the value of relevant materials appropriate for the introduction of Philosophy for Children cannot be overemphasised. I suggest that the materials, including textbooks, act as stimulus for philosophical inquiry. Some countries would opt for Lipman's purpose-written books and their accompanying teachers' manuals all translated into the local language of the learners. I have no objections since a complete method is already available and has been tested. Nonetheless, to curriculum planners I propose an African Philosophy for Children project that is founded on the African heritage. The African tales, the legends, proverbs, songs and riddles are an inexhaustible reservoir for engaging and developing critical thinking in children. However, as shown earlier, these need to provide stimuli while the Lipmanian method of inquiry will be complementary with its emphasis on rationality, argumentation, rigour and systemacity.

Research into how the above innovations can be adopted is as important as the reforms themselves. Research can promote innovation and advance its development, especially in Africa where Philosophy for Children has not been in existence. Since Philosophy for Children is a new arrival in the history of schooling, it is fertile ground for scholars and university professors, especially in Africa, to create and propose new methods and tools, including materials production, for use in Philosophy for Children classes in Africa. I recommend that funds be availed to researchers in higher education and working closely with teachers in schools in the form of action research if such a mega reform project is to take successful effect in Africa. Research headed by experts in the field is essential to evaluate the experimental teaching methodology with the hope of determining whether to proceed with the proposed reform.

Just like philosophy, Philosophy for Children in Africa applies its critical tool to itself. As a meta-philosophy, it helps us not only to sharpen the tools of doing philosophy with children but also ensures that the procedures we employ for such examinations are effective. The study is challenging scholars especially in the empirical sciences to think more deeply about the implications of the mega theoretical/conceptual exploration proposed for Africa. I will leave it to my colleagues in other fields of educational research to try out the case presented in this study in the context of schooling in Africa. The quest for an African perspective of Philosophy for Children leaves open space for researchers to unlock what this study has only touched on.

REFERENCE LIST

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